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# Adapting to a Protracted Refugee Crisis: Analyzing the humanitarian response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan

Zoe A. Bowman

Macalester College, [zbowman@macalester.edu](mailto:zbowman@macalester.edu)

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**Adapting to a Protracted Refugee Crisis:  
Analyzing the humanitarian response to the Syrian  
refugee crisis in Jordan**

Zoe Bowman  
An Honors Thesis in Political Science  
Macalester College  
Professor Wendy Weber  
April 14, 2016

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## **Abstract**

In the past, refugee status was considered a short-term consequence of conflict. Today, protracted refugee situations (PRS) are the norm rather than the exception. This shift has forced humanitarian actors to develop new strategies to handle the challenges of working with refugees in the long-term. This project examines the protracted refugee crisis of Syrian refugees in Jordan. Using interviews conducted in the summer of 2015 in Amman, Jordan, this paper asks (1) what are the implications of the PRS for Syrians in Jordan and (2) how can solutions implemented in past PRS provide answers on how to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan? Syrians in Jordan face barriers to leaving camps, cuts in humanitarian aid, and are not able to work legally. As a result, refugees have resorted to child labor, early marriage, and have even left Jordan to return to Syria or seek resettlement in Europe. After examining past responses to PRS, this research suggests that opening up special economic zones for Syrian employment in Jordan and shifting Sphere Standards would better meet the needs of refugees and host communities in the long-term.

## Acronyms

COR	Sudanese Commissioner for Refugees
CPA	Comprehensive Plan of Action
EU	European Union
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PDES	Policy Development and Evaluation Service
PRS	Protracted Refugee Situation
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
TANCOSS	Tanzania Comprehensive Solutions Strategy
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	UN High Commission for Refugees
UNRWA	UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East
WFP	World Food Program

## Chapter 1: Protracted Refugee Situations and the Syrian Refugee Crisis

As the conflict in Syria stretches into its fifth year, neighboring countries have been faced with a massive influx of refugees far greater than what anyone could have predicted in 2011. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as of April 4, 2016, there were over 4,800,000 registered Syrian refugees, most of whom are concentrated in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey.<sup>1</sup> Today, there are no signs that the conflict is subsiding, or that it will be safe for refugees to return to their homes anytime soon. As a result, Syrian refugees living in host states are quickly becoming part of what UNHCR defines as a ‘protracted refugee situation’ (PRS).

Jordan has been faced with many challenges regarding the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees over the past four and a half years. A small country with few natural resources, Jordan has been a haven for refugees almost from its founding in 1946, welcoming large waves of Palestinians and Iraqis into its borders. Although Jordan has not ratified the 1951 UNHCR Refugee Convention, the government still recognizes Syrians as refugees and has granted them political asylum. However, the over 650,000<sup>2</sup> Syrians in Jordan have created unprecedented challenges, stretching its resources and infrastructure to the limits. High rates of unemployment, overcrowded schools, and

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<sup>1</sup> “Syria Regional Refugee Response,” *UNHCR*, Accessed April 9, 2016.

<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>

This figure includes 2.1 million Syrians registered by UNHCR in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon, 1.9 million Syrians registered by the Government of Turkey, as well as more than 28,000 Syrian refugees registered in North Africa

<sup>2</sup> “2015 UNHCR Operations Profile- Jordan,” *UNHCR*, Accessed September 9, 2015.

<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486566.html>

limited affordable resources are all issues of particular concern. In addition, integration into host communities and access to food are significant challenges for Syrian refugees.

The humanitarian response to the crisis has involved many different actors and organizations, but remains chronically underfunded. The humanitarian response has been spearheaded by UNHCR in coordination with the Jordanian government and sixty-six implementing partners, including other branches of the UN, international NGOs, and community-based Jordanian organizations.<sup>3</sup> The government has allowed urban refugees access to public education and other services, and at this time they are treated as uninsured Jordanians at the public hospitals. The government also established two main camps in Jordan: Za'atari in 2012 and Azraq in 2014. UNHCR's many implementing partners cover a wide range of services and issue areas including food security, shelter, water and sanitation, and camp management. Despite the large number of implementing partners, the humanitarian response is vastly underfunded. In 2016, UNHCR appealed for \$1,105,517,045 and in March 2016 had only received seven percent of the total amount requested.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to examine how humanitarian actors have adapted to the Syrian refugee crisis, and the results of their actions, for several reasons. First, the aid community is responsible for a very large amount of money, and how they decide to spend it has a tremendous impact on both refugees and host communities. Furthermore, the programming they choose, particularly in light of decreased funding and/or organizational capacity, fundamentally impacts the lives of thousands of refugees. This

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<sup>3</sup> "Syria Regional Refugee Response," *UNHCR*, Accessed April 9, 2016.  
<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486566.html>

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*



includes where they live, what they eat, and even how and where their children are educated. It is also important to analyze this situation in comparison to other protracted refugee crises in different parts of the world. In the context of the existing literature on PRS, this project seeks to show how the humanitarian response has impacted the situation in Jordan and how solutions may be implemented.

In order to analyze these issues, my thesis will ask two questions; (1) what are the implications of the humanitarian response to the PRS for Syrians in Jordan, and (2) how can solutions implemented in past protracted refugee situations provide answers on how to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan?

### *Methodology*

This research seeks to place the PRS of Syrian refugees in Jordan in the broader context of PRS in different parts of the world. As a result, we can understand how to best respond to the Syrian refugee crisis and learn more about the nature of PRS as a whole. In order to accomplish this, the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan is presented as a case study of PRS. This case is important to study as part of broader research on PRS for several reasons. First, the PRS in Jordan is only in its fifth year, the shortest amount of time possible for a refugee situation to be considered protracted. The response to the refugee situation on the part of the host government, UNHCR, and the international community is still adapting to rapidly changing circumstances on the ground. The response of Syrian refugees themselves to the situation is also shifting as they find new coping mechanisms

and solutions. Studying this situation will allow us to examine a PRS as it is unfolds, revealing differences or similarities between past and contemporary responses to PRS.

Another reason that the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan is a valuable case study is because Jordan is one of several countries, along with Lebanon and Turkey, hosting large numbers of Syrian refugees. Studying the humanitarian response in Jordan will permit us to closely examine how one host community and government responds to the refugee crisis. As a whole, the case study method will allow this project to apply research conducted in the previous decade to one of the most pressing international issues of the day.

However, the single case study approach also has its limitations. While it allows for in-depth information and research on this particular situation, some aspects of the PRS in Jordan may not apply elsewhere for various reasons related to the specific politics, geography, and economy of Jordan. In addition, many Syrians, as citizens of a middle-income country, have different, usually higher, standards and expectations than people in other places where protracted refugee situations have occurred.

The literature on PRS stems mainly from a decade of initiatives on the subject conducted by UNHCR beginning in the late 1990s. In particular, this research draws upon evaluations of four situations of PRS conducted by UNHCR in 2010 and 2011, the years immediately preceding the Syrian conflict. The other part of the literature on PRS derives from academic literature surrounding refugee studies. While there are many studies on refugee experience and policy in general, there is limited literature specifically related to PRS.

An analysis of the humanitarian response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan was completed by conducting interviews with humanitarian workers in Jordan and by examining secondary sources such as NGO and news reports. Twenty-two interviews were conducted with individuals from sixteen organizations in June and July of 2015 in Amman, Jordan. Though every organization provided humanitarian relief to Syrian refugees living in Jordan, their missions and organizational structures were very diverse. Some of the organizations were small, community-based groups while others were branches of large, international organizations. One interviewee worked with the World Food Program (WFP), a humanitarian branch of the UN that works closely with UNHCR. These organizations therefore represented a variety of perspectives and agendas. For example, the organizations that were aligned with the royal family in Jordan were more likely to emphasize the challenge facing the government and public resources as a result of the Syrian crisis while international NGOs were more likely to discuss the lack of sustained donor engagement or problems coordinating with the government and UNHCR.

The interviewees were often mid-level employees or program managers at their humanitarian organizations. They worked in many different sectors of humanitarian relief, including child protection, education, food security and shelter. One of the interviewees worked for a radio station that reported on human rights abuses suffered by Syrian refugees in Jordan. Most of the interviewees were Jordanian citizens, but a few were Europeans who were working with international NGOs. One interviewee was Syrian, but he had been living in Russia prior to the conflict.

These interviews were gathered by emailing contacts listed on the UNHCR Jordan website as coordinating partners in urban areas. Other interviews contacts were made at the suggestion of earlier interviewees. The interviews were conducted in the offices of the aid workers, and at some of them the presence of a translator was required. Interviewees will be referred to by a number, rather than by their name or organization, in order to preserve their anonymity. This is at the request of several interviewees, as at times sensitive information was disclosed.<sup>5</sup>

Interviewees were asked about the challenges facing their organizations in camps and urban areas as well as what they saw as the greatest challenges facing Syrian refugees in Jordan.<sup>6</sup> They were also asked about the government response, how the situation has changed in the past five years, and the response of the host community. In addition, interviewees were questioned on the benefits for refugees of living in host communities and camps. From an organizational standpoint, some interviewees were asked if their funding has changed over the course of the crisis, how they prioritize aid, and how they coordinate with other humanitarian actors. In general, the interviews allowed the researcher to gather the perspectives of aid workers working in many different parts of the field with very different responsibilities.

The NGO and think tank reports and news articles allowed the project to examine the Syrian refugee crisis more broadly, looking at larger statistics and issues not always discussed by interviewees. NGO reports and news articles provide up-to-date information on issues that have yet to be covered in academic journals. Often, the secondary sources

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix A for list of interviews and dates.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix B for interview questions.

reinforced the statements made by the aid workers in interviews. Together, the interviews and secondary sources allow for an analysis of the protracted situation in Jordan from a micro and macro level.

### *Overview of the chapters*

To answer the research questions (1) what are the implications of the humanitarian response to the PRS for Syrians in Jordan, and (2) how can solutions implemented in past protracted refugee situations provide answers on how to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan, chapter two will provide a literature review of the policy and academic documents on PRS. This literature analyzes the humanitarian response and solutions implemented in past PRS. The chapter will begin by explaining the history and definition of PRS and then review the humanitarian response to four different PRS evaluated by UNHCR; the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, the Eritrean Refugees in Eastern Sudan, the Burundian refugees in Tanzania, and the Croatian refugees in Serbia. The chapter will conclude by examining the durable solutions to PRS implemented by humanitarian actors in these situations.

Chapter three presents the case study of the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan as a PRS. First, the chapter introduces the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and the government, UNHCR, and international response to the issue. Then, the chapter illustrates the difficulties facing Syrian refugees in camps and Jordanian host communities. In camps, refugees face sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and difficulties leaving camps. As a result some refugees are attempting to make it to a third country in Europe or return to Syria. Urban refugees face challenges due to barriers entering the labor market, low

levels of host community integration, and decreasing humanitarian aid. This has led to child labor, early marriage, and aid dependency. Lastly, the chapter analyzes the responses and solutions to past PRS in comparison to the refugee crisis in Jordan. With local integration as the only option, it is evident that Syrian refugees should be able to work legally in Jordan if they are going to successfully integrate into host communities.

Chapter four presents possible innovative solutions to the the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan. One solution is shifting the basis of humanitarian response, the Sphere Standards, to meet the needs of displaced communities in the long-term and opening up new types of aid for these communities. Another solution that could be implemented in Jordan is the creation of special economic zones in manufacturing where Syrians could work legally, becoming self-sustainable and contributing to the economy. The chapter concludes by posing questions for further research on the subject.

## **Chapter 2: UNHCR Response to Protracted Refugee Situations**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This research seeks to understand how the emerging PRS of Syrian refugees in Jordan fits in with the responses and solutions to other PRS in different parts of the world. First, this chapter will review the definition and history of PRS, beginning after WWII and continuing through the Cold War, based on UNHCR policy documents and academic literature on the subject. Next, this chapter will analyze the contexts of, and past responses to, the four protracted situations evaluated at the end of UNHCR decade of initiatives in Serbia, Bangladesh, Eastern Sudan, and Tanzania. Finally, the chapter will conclude by examining past solutions to PRS utilized by UNHCR and other humanitarian actors, specifically how the three durable solutions, repatriation, resettlement, and local integration, were implemented in these cases. This literature concludes that resettlement is not a large-scale option for refugees, repatriation must be flexible and voluntary, and local integration is only effective when refugees are allowed to enter the host country's labor market and access public resources.

While there is an existing literature on PRS, it is relatively new and limited in scope. Most of the focus in PRS literature centers on situations in East Africa and Southeast Asia and was written during the 1990s and early 2000s during the UNHCR decade of initiatives on PRS. Partly because Palestinian refugees fall under the jurisdiction of United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) rather than UNHCR, information on PRS in the Middle East is rare. In addition, academic and UNHCR policy

literature on the long-term effects of the Syrian refugee crisis is limited as the crisis is ongoing.

Before the civil war, Syria was a middle income country whose citizens enjoyed high levels of education. For example, 99.6% of children were enrolled in primary school and only 1.7% of the population lived below the international poverty line.<sup>7</sup> Most of the other populations studied in the literature have higher rates of poverty and lower rates of education. Due to the significant differences between Syria and other countries where people have been displaced in the long term, as well as disparities between the host countries in the Syrian refugee crisis as compared to other host countries in PRS, it is important to examine how the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan will fit in with or differ from the causes, effects, and solutions of PRS in other parts of the world.

Most of the literature on PRS comes from UNHCR policy documents, including evaluation reports, research papers, and standing committee papers. This literature stems from a decade of initiatives on PRS in UNHCR from 1999-2009, during which the High Commissioner for Refugees and the UNHCR standing committee commissioned reports and held meetings on the subject. In 2008, the High Commissioner for Refugees started a Special Initiative on PRS to “promote durable solutions and improvements in the life of these refugees.”<sup>8</sup> The Special Initiative focused on five situations of PRS in different parts of the world, and in 2010 four of these situations were selected for evaluation. The four situations of PRS chosen for evaluation were the Croatian refugees in Serbia, the

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<sup>7</sup> “At a Glance: Syrian Arab Republic,” *UNICEF*, Accessed 4.10/16.  
[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/syria\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/syria_statistics.html)

<sup>8</sup> Jeff Crisp and Ole Anderson, “Evaluation of the Protracted Refugee Situation (PRS) For Burundians in Tanzania,” *UNHCR and Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs*. 2010.



Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, the Eritrean refugees in Eastern Sudan, and the Burundian refugees in Tanzania. A review of the policy documents and academic literature produced during and prior to the decade of initiatives show how PRS came to be defined.

## **2.2 History and Definition of PRS**

This section traces the definition and origin of the concept of PRS. While most of the literature on PRS stems from UNHCR documents and evaluations, there is also academic literature that criticizes or deepens UNHCR explorations of the topic. First this section will examine the definition of PRS and how it has evolved over time, even though some scholars still argue that the definition is not inclusive enough. Then, this section will look at the history of PRS, beginning in the aftermath of WWII and increasing in the Cold War era. Lastly, this section will investigate the decade of initiatives on the topic of PRS by UNHCR and the accompanying policy documents and evaluations.

### *Definition of PRS*

UNHCR policy literature began to focus on PRS in the late 1990s and gained momentum in 1999 at the beginning of the decade of initiatives on PRS led by UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit and High Commissioner. In one of the earliest documents in this series, UNHCR defined protracted refugee situations as,

...one in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled

after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance.<sup>9</sup>

In this definition, UNHCR emphasizes the negative impacts and restrictions imposed upon the lives of refugees living in PRS. In early definitions of PRS, UNHCR specified that a situation was considered protracted only when there were at least 25,000 refugees in a host country for five or more years “without immediate prospects for implementation of durable solutions.”<sup>10</sup> In 2004, UNHCR changed the definition by omitting the condition of 25,000 refugees for a situation to be considered a ‘major’ PRS. Leaving out this qualification made the term more inclusive and acknowledged the different sized populations of host states and the fluctuating nature of PRS around the world. Furthermore, finding the exact number of refugees living in a host state at any given time was complicated given the difficulties of attaining comprehensive and reliable statistics on refugees. In part as a result of this expanded definition, in 2008 over 30 refugee situations around the world were considered protracted and two-thirds of the global refugee population fit into the definition of a PRS.<sup>11</sup>

However, some academics have argued that UNHCR’s definition of PRS is not inclusive enough. Loescher and Milner argue that the UNHCR definition of PRS neglects to include the importance of a variety of political, strategic, and economic factors that may contribute to how a country responds to a PRS. A definition should also highlight how PRS consists of “chronic, unresolved, and recurring refugee problems, not only

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<sup>9</sup> “Protracted Refugee Situations,” *Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme*. 2010.

<sup>10</sup> James Milner and Gil Loescher, “Responding to Protracted Refugee Situations: Lessons from a Decade of Discussion,” *Forced Migration Policy Briefing 6*, Refugees Study Centre (2011): 3.

<sup>11</sup> Gil Loescher, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press. (2008): 20.

static populations.”<sup>12</sup> In addition, they argue, the definition should implicate both the host country and country of origin in causing and finding solutions to PRS.

### *PRS in WWII and the Cold War*

In order to understand PRS as a concept and the UNHCR decade of initiatives on the subject as an important new direction, it is necessary to review the history of UNHCR responses to PRS. According to Loescher and Milner, “Chronic and stagnating refugee situations have been a long-standing challenge to the international community over the past six decades.”<sup>13</sup> Upon its creation, UNHCR was charged with the responsibility of aiding the thousands left displaced in the wake of World War II. Many of these people remained displaced well into the 1950s. In 1959, with refugees from World War II still remaining in Europe, UNHCR declared a ‘World Refugee Year’. Western governments were encouraged to provide funds and enact resettlement quotas, and UNHCR began a comprehensive response program for displaced people in and outside of refugee camps. Due to these measures, the post-World War II PRS was resolved.<sup>14</sup>

Several cases of PRS occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Conflicts in many parts of the developing world, such as Indochina, Afghanistan, Central America, the Horn of Africa, and Southern Africa, led to a profusion of PRS. At the time, Loescher and Milner claimed, “the international community failed to devise comprehensive or long-term political solutions or to provide any alternatives to prolonged camp existence, and finding

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<sup>12</sup> Loescher, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications*, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Milner and Lescher, “Responding to Protracted Refugee Situations: Lessons from a Decade of Discussion,” 6.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, 7.

solutions for these refugee situations became increasingly difficult.”<sup>15</sup> The lives of many refugees were put on hold as they were both unable to return to their home country or integrate into their host communities.

It wasn’t until after the Cold War that many refugees were able to repatriate. According to the UNHCR, over nine million refugees repatriated in the years 1991-1996 worldwide.<sup>16</sup> Two of the largest groups of returnees were the Indochinese boat people and Central Americans facing intra-state conflicts in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. Repatriation was successful in these cases in part due to UNHCR’s Comprehensive Plans of Action (CPAs) which drew on a variety of solutions and encouraged deep international support to end PRS. UNHCR characterizes these plans as successful in that they are comprehensive, cooperative, and collaborative. They are comprehensive because they draw on many different solutions, cooperative because they involve burden sharing between countries of origin, host states, and the international community, and collaborative because they included many UN agencies and other humanitarian actors.<sup>17</sup> Milner and Loescher report, “CPAs were conceived as sustained political processes with ongoing dialogue and negotiation.”<sup>18</sup> However, these successful cases in Central America and Indochina were not able to be replicated everywhere, and PRS continued to haunt many parts of the world.

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<sup>15</sup>Milner and Loescher, “Responding to Protracted Refugee Situations: Lessons from a Decade of Discussion,” 7.

<sup>16</sup>*ibid.*, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander Betts, “Historical lessons for overcoming protracted refugee situations”, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press. (2008): 20.

<sup>18</sup> Milner and Loescher, “Responding to Protracted Refugee Situations: Lessons from a Decade of Discussion,” 8.

Despite the resolution of several refugee situations at the close of the Cold War, the number of refugees and displaced people around the world significantly increased. While some Cold War conflicts, such as those in Afghanistan and Angola, persisted into the 1990s, new intra-state conflicts emerged in many parts of the world and caused new refugee flows that numbered in the millions. By 2005, the two largest PRS were Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, numbering 960,000 and 953,000 refugees respectively. The third and fourth largest PRS involved 444,000 Burundians in Tanzania and 299,000 Vietnamese in China.<sup>19</sup> The persistence of PRS in many parts of the world led to a movement within UNHCR to address these situations.

### *Decade of Initiatives*

Given the depth and scope of PRS by the end of the 1990s, UNHCR launched a decade of initiatives on the subject of PRS. It was during this time that UNHCR, as well as NGOs and states, became more active and engaged on issues surrounding PRS. In the early 2000s UNHCR and other organizations were, for the most part, able to take a step back from focusing on solving new refugee situations and began to examine the causes, effects, and implications of PRS. Loescher and Milner state, “Compared to the 1990s, there were far fewer intra-state conflicts and, apart from Darfur and Iraq, fewer refugee emergencies, thus permitting more attention to be paid to PRS.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, humanitarian actors were able to turn their attention to long-term humanitarian concerns.

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<sup>19</sup> Gil Loescher and James Milner, “Understanding the problem of protracted refugee situations”, *Protracted refugee situations: Political, human rights, and security implications* Tokyo: United Nations University Press. (2008): 23.

<sup>20</sup> Milner and Loescher, “Responding to Protracted Refugee Situations: Lessons from a Decade of Discussion,” 9.

The UNHCR decade of initiatives includes a number of evaluation reports, research papers, standing committee papers, and other official documents. This set of papers focuses on many different issue areas and geographical locations within the study of PRS. In particular, the documents discuss the humanitarian approach to providing aid for refugees in PRS, distinguishing between a ‘livelihoods’ and ‘care and maintenance’ approach. As opposed to a care and maintenance approach that only attempts to meet the basic needs of refugees, a livelihoods approach highlights the importance of increasing the capacities of refugees to survive on their own. Simultaneously, the UNHCR High Commissioner launched a series of discussions in Executive Committee and Standing Committee meetings to discuss the causes and consequences of PRS. As a whole, these documents contributed to a better understanding of the causes, implications, and solutions related to PRS.<sup>21</sup>

During the decade of initiatives on PRS, the efforts of UNHCR to learn more about PRS were also taken up by academic institutions and host governments. This includes the PRS Project at the University of Oxford, Griffith University in Australia, York University in Canada, and special edition of *Forced Migration Review* dedicated to the subject.<sup>22</sup> This effort was also reflected in the actions and policies of certain host governments. Host states such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Tanzania all began to consider naturalization and integration policies, rather than containment within camps, for refugees living in their borders.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Milner and Loescher, “Responding to Protracted Refugee Situations: Lessons from a Decade of Discussion,” 9.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, 10.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, 10.

In 2008-2009, the decade of initiatives culminated in three main events. First, there was the creation of the High Commissioner's Initiative on Protracted Refugee Situations in June 2008. In December of 2008 there was the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection challenges addressing protracted refugee situations. The conclusion of the decade of initiatives was the creation of the Executive Committee Conclusion paper that gives the definition of PRS and outlines best practices for responding. This long-negotiated document was published in December 2009.<sup>24</sup> UNHCR Executive Committee spent seven months negotiating the details of the conclusion, and divides between the Global North and the Global South, donor states and host states, were evident.<sup>25</sup> In most protracted situations, the donor states are in the Global North and the host countries are usually in the Global South. This document formalizes the new definition of what constitutes PRS and does not name the number of refugees needed to have a situation be considered a PRS.

As a whole, these documents provide the framework for UNHCR's response to PRS from the late 1990s to the present. The literature reflects the objectives and priorities of the countries that formed the discussions and authored the papers, in particular the need for international solidarity and burden sharing as well as programs that support refugee livelihoods and end their perpetual dependence on aid. The next section will examine the context and response to the four PRS that were chosen by UNHCR for evaluation as part of the decade of initiatives.

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<sup>24</sup> "Conclusion on Protracted Refugee Situations," Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (1). 2009. Accessed October 10, 2015.

<sup>25</sup> Milner, James and Loescher, Gil, "Responding to Protracted Refugee Situations: Lessons from a Decade of Discussion," Forced Migration Policy Briefing 6, Refugees Study Centre (2011): 14.

## 2.3 PRS Contexts and Humanitarian Response

As part of UNHCR decade of initiatives on PRS, the UNHCR High Commissioner selected four PRS for evaluation. The four protracted situations chosen were the Croatian refugees in Serbia, the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, the Eritrean refugees in Eastern Sudan, and the Burundian refugees in Tanzania. These evaluations were conducted by the Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) in UNHCR in conjunction with NGO and government partners including the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The reports also draw on the work of scholars studying issues related to refugees in the specific geographical areas. The PDES claims it is “committed to the systematic examination and assessment of UNHCR policies, programmes, projects, practices and partnerships,” in order to promote research and analysis on issues related to UNHCR projects and fuel information exchange between researchers, policy makers, and humanitarian practitioners.<sup>26</sup> Besides reviewing the work of UNHCR in these situations, these reports analyze the response of the international community, government actors, and other humanitarian groups. They also discuss the issues and challenges facing refugees in these situations.

UNHCR frames approaches to PRS in terms of three durable solutions. As discussed in the first section, durable solutions usually fall into three categories:

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<sup>26</sup> Richard Allen, Angela Li Rosi, Maria Skeie, “Should I Stay or Should I Go?: A Review of UNHCR’s Response to the Protracted Refugee Situation in Croatia and Serbia,” *UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Services* (2010).



voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement.<sup>27</sup> There are also some situations in which combinations of one or more of these solutions are utilized. These solutions are considered durable because they allow refugees to become self-reliant and independent of humanitarian aid. In order to be successful, each approach must take into consideration the needs of refugees and host communities and draw upon the resources and seek the cooperation of the country of origin, host state, and international community.

Studying the humanitarian response of different host governments, UN agencies, and NGOs around the world will allow us to place the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan the context of a broader literature on PRS. Among the four PRS chosen for evaluation, the literature shows that PRS is successfully resolved when host countries allow refugees access to their public services and labor market and flexibility in crossing borders is maintained between host countries and countries of origin. PRS stagnates when refugees are kept in camps, separated from host communities and employment opportunities and dependent on humanitarian aid. Before analyzing the individual cases of PRS, this section reviews the humanitarian response to PRS in general over the past two decades.

### *Humanitarian Response to PRS*

In general, the humanitarian aid community uses the Sphere Standards as guidelines to respond to any humanitarian crisis. The Sphere Standards are “a set of humanitarian principles, standards of service, and indicators (in such areas as water and

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<sup>27</sup> “Protracted Refugee Situations,” Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme (1). 2010. Accessed October 10, 2015.

sanitation, food and food security, shelter, material resources and health services) that have been widely applied in emergencies worldwide.”<sup>28</sup> These standards were put in place by NGOs who sought to professionalize and standardize humanitarianism. Created in 1998, these standards were revised in 2004 and now contain contributions and input from over 400 organizations around the world.<sup>29</sup> Sphere Standards were primarily created to meet acute needs in emergency situations.

It is important to note the historical context from which the Sphere Standards emerged. These standards were created at least in part as a result of the very public failures of humanitarianism after the 1994 Rwandan genocide. After the preventable deaths of 80,000 refugees living in camps, the aid community and donors desired standards that would hold humanitarian actors accountable in emergency situations and prevent such tragedies from taking place.<sup>30</sup> However, while the Sphere Standards provided useful tools and measurements for humanitarian actors working in short-term emergencies to promote immediate survival, these standards failed to reflect the needs of a growing number of refugees living in protracted situations.

In the decade between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s, trends in displacement experienced significant shifts. The number of protracted situations grew, as did the proportion of refugees living in PRS. In 1993, the average length of time people spent in protracted displacement was nine years. By 2003, that number grew to 17 years.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Lotus McDougal, and Jennifer Beard, "Revisiting Sphere: New Standards of Service Delivery for New Trends in Protracted Displacement," *Disasters* 35 (2011): 90.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*, 90.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, 90.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, 89.

However, the Sphere Standards that guide humanitarian action did not change along with the nature of displacement for millions of people across the globe.

These practices have led to serious gaps in care for refugees, leaving them vulnerable to “high levels of chronic malnutrition” and “increased morbidity”<sup>32</sup>. Government policies that keep refugees in camps and unable to work leaves them dependent on aid organizations that abide by these standards. Furthermore, these standards fail to connect displaced persons with aid organizations so they can provide input on the services they receive. The Sphere Standards also neglect to address capacity building and incorporating aid work into host communities, two essential needs of refugees living in urban areas. In conclusion, “Without systems in place to address medium- and long-term health concerns and provide social and economic infrastructure support, these populations are missing crucial opportunities to develop and lead productive lives.”<sup>33</sup> In order to see how these humanitarian aid policies and standards have affected PRS, it is necessary to examine the literature on the four cases chosen for evaluation by UNHCR in the decade of initiatives.

### *Croatian Refugees in Serbia*

Croatian refugees primarily entered Serbia between 1991 and 1995, in the years following the Balkan wars. Around 300,000 people were displaced over the course of those four years. In the years following, many Croatian refugees in Serbia were unable to return home due to the security situation and issues concerning reconstruction and

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<sup>32</sup> McDougal and Beard, "Revisiting Sphere: New Standards of Service Delivery for New Trends in Protracted Displacement," 89.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid*, 88.

property ownership in Croatia.<sup>34</sup> Croatians in Serbia live in host communities, but a small number also live in refugee camps or ‘collective centers’. By early 2010, UNHCR reported that out of the original number of refugees from 1991-1995, 175,000 had chosen to naturalize in Serbia, 93,00 repatriated to Croatia, and 13,600 were resettled into other countries.<sup>35</sup> Only around 1,000 Croatians lived in collective centers by 2010.

Out of the four cases evaluated, the PRS of Croatian refugees in Serbia has had perhaps the best outcome because of the options for both integration and repatriation for many refugees. Refugees may move between Croatia and Serbia, and they are also able to naturalize and become Serbian citizens without barriers to public services or the labor market. While some Croatian refugees still face economic hardship, many have obtained one of UNHCR’s durable solutions as a result of strong political efforts on the part of the UNHCR, host government, and country of origin as well as effective collaboration between humanitarian and development actors distributing aid. However, there are still financial and social obstacles for some refugees seeking durable solutions.

When the evaluation was conducted in 2010, refugees had the option to naturalize and become Serbian citizens or repatriate to their home countries. This was in large part thanks to intense diplomatic efforts on the part of the UNHCR, the host country, and the country of origin. The Sarajevo Declaration in 2005 “established a forum for international cooperation on the refugee issue” that involved Croatia, Serbia, and neighboring states as well as international organizations like the European Union and UNHCR. Since then, continued diplomatic efforts have been made by both the Croatian

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<sup>34</sup>“Protracted Refugee Situations,” *Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme* (1). 2010. Accessed October 10, 2015.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*, 2.

government and UNHCR. Focusing on Croatian refugees in Serbia as part of the decade of initiatives on PRS has in part served to draw international attention and renew diplomatic efforts on this issue. Furthermore, the Croatian government has taken positive steps to address the PRS. In 2010,

A new government and President in Croatia have created a much more positive atmosphere of collaboration between the two countries. This has led to the most recent agreement on refugees and return issues, in November 2010.<sup>36</sup>

A combination of these efforts led to opportunities for Croatians to become naturalized citizens of Serbia and enjoy the benefits of their public services and livelihoods opportunities. They also helped facilitate the political and economic conditions in which Croatians could repatriate.

A second area that was successful in addressing the PRS in Serbia was how humanitarian aid focused on providing refugees with sustainable solutions. This was accomplished by targeting aid at long-term projects and by utilizing private sector investments. Humanitarian aid was primarily invested in livelihoods programs, affordable housing, promoting livelihoods, and legal aid. To combat dwindling aid funding, humanitarian actors explored “capital investment sources, such as loans from international financial institutions and the private finance sector.”<sup>37</sup>

Despite the many successes in the effort to end the PRS in Serbia, several challenges remain, and the poorest Croatian refugees remain vulnerable. While working in Serbia is legal for Croatians, “unemployment levels are significantly higher amongst

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<sup>36</sup> “Protracted Refugee Situations,” *Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme*, 2.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*, 3.

refugees than amongst Serbian citizens.”<sup>38</sup> In addition, refugees face poor living conditions inside of the community centers, “the norm being very small living spaces, overcrowding, shared bathrooms and limited privacy.”<sup>39</sup> These challenges highlight the difficulties and complexities inherent to resolving situations to PRS. Even when there are multiple solutions available, the most vulnerable refugees may still be caught in limbo. For Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, a far greater number of refugees remain stuck.

### *Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh*

Bangladesh has received two waves of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, first in 1978 and then in 1991-1992. Each time, around 250,000 refugees entered Bangladesh. Both of the refugee influxes “involved large-scale repatriation exercises whose voluntariness was seriously questioned.”<sup>40</sup> Even after returning to Bangladesh, not all refugees were able to recover their official refugee status. In 2010, there were around 29,000 registered Rohingya refugees and around 36,000 unrecognized refugees in “makeshift sites” which humanitarian actors have access too. Lastly, UNHCR estimates that there are around 200,000 undocumented Rohingya in Bangladesh host communities.<sup>41</sup> The evaluation claimed that out of all of the total refugee population, UNHCR is only able to assist 10%.

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<sup>38</sup> “Protracted Refugee Situations,” *Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme*, 17.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid*, 15.

<sup>40</sup> Esther Kiragu and Angela Li Rosi, “States of Denial: A Review of UNHCR’s Response to the Protracted Refugee Situation of Stateless Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh,” *UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Services* (2011): 1.

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, 1.

Conditions for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are poor, largely due to the poverty in Bangladesh. Refugees are concentrated in the poorest areas of the country, which also has been suffering from natural disasters with increasing frequency in the last several years. Many of the Rohingya refugees are unable to benefit from any of the three durable solutions because of the barriers in place for local integration, poor conditions in refugee camps, and issues with cooperation between the host government and UNHCR.

Local integration is all but impossible for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Although the Rohingya share a religious, social, ethnic, and linguistic connection, there is still a largely negative opinion of the refugees in Bangladesh. There are restrictions placed on their freedom of movement, and they face barriers in obtaining secondary education and livelihoods opportunities. In general, they face difficulties accessing basic needs such as healthcare, food, and water.<sup>42</sup> Denied the ability to earn an income and provide for themselves, some refugees have turned to negative coping mechanisms and may become victims of SGBV or malnutrition.<sup>43</sup>

Conditions are especially difficult for refugees inside the camps, where they receive low levels of support from the humanitarian community. They face significant protection problems, and SGBV and early marriage are prevalent.<sup>44</sup> Some refugees have problems with official documentation, which complicates their ability to receive any aid.<sup>45</sup> Education was not officially established in the camps until 2006, and in 2012 UNICEF announced that they would no longer support education in camps. Furthermore, although

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<sup>42</sup> Kiragu and Li Rosi, “States of Denial: A Review of UNHCR’s Response to the Protracted Refugee Situation of Stateless Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh,” 1.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid*, 17.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid*, 13.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*, 14.

thousands of refugees have finished primary school, only Bangladeshi citizens are able to take the test to receive a graduation certificate. If children wish to continue on to secondary school, they do so at great risk. The report states, “Considerable numbers of young people regularly leave camps to attend government secondary schools, sometimes under an assumed identity as it is formally forbidden to do so. The parents of such children usually have to make enormous sacrifices to keep them in school.”<sup>46</sup>

One of the reasons for the challenges facing the Rohingya in Bangladesh is the lack of coordination and cooperation between the host government, UNHCR, and international aid community. The Bangladeshi government is not signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and opposes local integration.<sup>47</sup> They have often complained that the UNHCR and the international community has not supported them enough; the government has many problems facing their population already without the additional burden of supporting the Rohingya. The report acknowledges that until 2006, UNHCR efforts were “modest, ad hoc in nature, inadequately publicized and consequently failed to gain any significant dividend in terms of refugee protection and solutions.”<sup>48</sup> Even after 2006 when the UNHCR increased their efforts in Bangladesh, some of their programs were met with frustration from the Bangladeshi government, who accused UNHCR of rehabilitating refugees and finding them jobs under the pretext of helping Bangladeshi locals.

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<sup>46</sup> Kiragu and Li Rosi, “States of Denial: A Review of UNHCR’s Response to the Protracted Refugee Situation of Stateless Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh,” 18.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid*, 11.



Overall, the situation for Rohingya refugees in host communities and camps is desperate, and the situation has been exacerbated by the lack of attention and funding on the part of the international community and poor cooperation on the part of UNHCR and the host government.

### *Eritrean Refugees in Eastern Sudan*

The PRS in Eastern Sudan is one of the longest ever. This is a result of the political situation in Eritrea, limited resettlement opportunities, and the unwillingness of the Sudanese government to allow refugees to integrate into host communities. These problems are compounded by the fact that Eastern Sudan is already one of the poorest regions in the world. The PDES report reads,

According to a recent World Bank paper, “eastern Sudan remains one of the poorest regions among the northern states of Sudan ... and relatively neglected in political and social investment terms. As a host community to refugees and IDPs, most of the population of eastern Sudan itself suffers from acute poverty and limited development prospects.”<sup>49</sup>

Poverty and lack of development opportunities already present the Sudanese government with enormous challenges, and the influx of refugees has only intensified the problems the country faced.

Eritrean refugees have been in Eastern Sudan since the late 1960s, with the refugee population peaking in 1990 with 800,000 refugees. In 2011 the refugee population stood at 80,000, with most refugees residing in camps. Refugees are not able to repatriate due to human rights issues and political opposition in Eritrea. Very few have

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<sup>49</sup> Guido Ambroso, Jeff Crisp, and Nivene Albert, “No Turning Back: A Review of UNHCR’s Response to the Protracted Refugee Situation in Eastern Sudan,” UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Services (2011): 23.

access to resettlement opportunities, leaving integration as the only durable solution available to the majority of Eritreans.

Like the two previous cases, Eritreans share close cultural, religious, and linguistic links to their hosts. However, there have been many challenges to local integration into host communities. Eritreans are unable to naturalize and become citizens of Eastern Sudan, and they cannot own land or property.<sup>50</sup> They also face restrictions on their freedom of movement and difficulties entering the labor market. SGBV and human trafficking are prevalent. However, UNHCR aid has been reduced in some areas, and refugees have found work in agricultural or informal labor sectors.<sup>51</sup>

There are also many challenges facing refugees living in camps. According to the PDES report, the camps are located in “the poorest parts of the country, characterized by low levels of rainfall, chronic food insecurity, poor development indicators and limited support from central government.”<sup>52</sup> Education, even at a primary level, is also a challenge for refugee children and their families. According to the PDES report, refugees complain about having to travel long distances to get to schools, and that the schools themselves are overcrowded. Furthermore, many children are unable to stay in school because they start working in the informal labor market. Early marriage is also prevalent and prevents many girls from finishing school.

Like in Bangladesh, there has been some conflict and tension between aid organizations and the host government. UNHCR has been established in Sudan since the

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<sup>50</sup>Ambroso, Crisp, and Albert, “No Turning Back: A Review of UNHCR’s Response to the Protracted Refugee Situation in Eastern Sudan,” 17.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid*, 16.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid*, 5.

1970s, and has spent \$800,000 on the PRS between that time and 2011.<sup>53</sup> Humanitarian aid was coordinated by UNHCR and the Sudanese Commissioner for Refugees (COR), which is funded by UNHCR. However, there has been debate around the intentions of the COR. The PDES reports,

According to many commentators, COR's institutional interests lie in perpetuating - rather than resolving - the Eritrean refugee situation. Elders within the refugee community (normally appointed by COR) appear to have aligned themselves with COR on this matter, their principal concern being to maintain the flow of food and other humanitarian aid into the refugee camps that they help to administer.<sup>54</sup>

Rather than working with other institutions to resolve the PRS and help refugees integrate, the Sudanese government is interested in perpetuating a cycle of humanitarian aid that also benefits host communities. As a result, none of the three durable solutions identified by UNHCR have been successful, and local integration remains a distant goal for many Eritrean refugees.

### *Burundian Refugees in Tanzania*

The influx of Burundian refugees came to Tanzania in multiple waves, and the governmental and humanitarian response has shifted over time. The first wave of refugees came to Tanzania in 1972, and the government gave the 160,000 Burundians plots of land in three different areas in Tanzania. This allowed the refugees to reestablish rural, agricultural livelihoods.<sup>55</sup> They soon became socially integrated into Tanzanian

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<sup>53</sup> Ambroso, Crisp, and Albert, "No Turning Back: A Review of UNHCR's Response to the Protracted Refugee Situation in Eastern Sudan," 9.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid*, 10.

<sup>55</sup> Crisp and Anderson, "Evaluation of the Protracted Refugee Situation (PRS) For Burundians in Tanzania," 7.

host communities and children were educated in the Tanzanian school system. By 1985, UNHCR withdrew from Tanzania, as Burundians were integrated into Tanzania and were self-sustaining.<sup>56</sup> The response to the refugee influx coincided with a time of relative prosperity and stability for Tanzania, and it was also at a time that they were attempting to develop agriculture in remote regions. These factors contributed to the warm response to this wave of refugees and their subsequent independence from aid.<sup>57</sup> However, this refugee policy did not endure the other waves of Burundian refugees that arrived in Tanzania.

In 1993, the second wave of Burundian refugees arrived in Tanzania, and the political climate in the host country and the treatment of refugees was very different from 1972. In the 1990s, there was a distinct “change in political culture and a focus on internal security... coupled with lack of international support to deal with the problem.”<sup>58</sup> As a result, the 130,000 refugees that arrived in Tanzania at that time were placed in refugee camps. In 2003, the government enacted a new national refugee policy and restrictions were placed on their freedom of movement and economic activity. According to the PDES report, “The 1993 group of refugees has followed the more traditional restrictive conditions for refugees applied globally.”<sup>59</sup> A few years after the national refugee policy was passed, the government declared their goal to become a refugee free zone.

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<sup>56</sup>Crisp and Anderson, “Evaluation of the Protracted Refugee Situation (PRS) For Burundians in Tanzania,” 7.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid*, 20.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid*, 20.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid*, 24.

In order to accomplish this goal, a new program was implemented in tandem with other government of Burundi and UNHCR. The Tanzania Comprehensive Solutions Strategy (TANCOSS) began in 2007 as a means to resolve the PRS. This plan had three pillars: repatriation, resettlement, and naturalization in Tanzania. Naturalization was the preferred option for most refugees.<sup>60</sup> The implementation of TANCOSS has been viewed as a success by UNHCR and some of its implementing partners, but the process of naturalizing refugees who were unable to repatriate or be resettled has taken longer than expected, putting the rights and livelihoods of some refugees in jeopardy. After analyzing the humanitarian response to the four protracted situations chosen for study during the decade of initiatives on PRS, the next section will examine the solutions utilized in each protracted situation.

## **2.4 Durable Solutions to PRS**

The context and response of each PRS was very different, and there are no perfect formulas to resolve PRS. However, there are some generalizations that can be made involving the effectiveness of certain strategies or policies. This section will show how voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and local integration have been utilized in the context of the four protracted situations discussed in the previous section. The literature will then help us understand how the lessons learned from the evaluations of these protracted situations can be applied to the Syrian refugee crisis unfolding in Jordan.

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<sup>60</sup> Crisp and Anderson, “Evaluation of the Protracted Refugee Situation (PRS) For Burundians in Tanzania,” 9.

### *Voluntary Repatriation*

The preferred solution to PRS by UNHCR is always voluntary repatriation, for it allows refugees to return to their former life.<sup>61</sup> This solution was not available for most refugees in Bangladesh and South Sudan, but was successful in Serbia. Voluntary repatriation occurs when refugees return to their country of origin. In this solution the word voluntary is emphasized in order to assure that refugees repatriate of their own free will. It is essential that the non-refoulement principle of international refugee law is not violated by coercing refugees to repatriate. According to Human Rights Watch, this prohibits a host government from

...returning a person to a real risk of persecution – where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, torture, or inhuman and degrading treatment.<sup>62</sup>

Refugees' health, safety, and human rights could be jeopardized if they return to their country before it is safe. In addition, if refugees return before infrastructure and state services are re-established in their home country, refugees may end up back in their host country, sometimes without the protections and rights they had when they left their country the first time.

Despite the considerable need for state and political action, there are still several things humanitarian actors can do to maximize the potential for voluntary repatriation. According to UNHCR, this includes supporting women's roles as peacemakers and

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<sup>61</sup> "Protracted Refugee Situations," Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (1). 2010. Accessed October 10, 2015.

<sup>62</sup> "Jordan: Vulnerable Refugees Forcibly Returned to Syria," *Human Rights Watch*, Last modified November 23, 2014, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/23/jordan-vulnerable-refugees-forcibly-returned-syria>

providing refugees with livelihoods training to prepare them to return to their home country.<sup>63</sup> As some refugees have spent years living in camps where they are unable to work, it is essential that refugees are allowed to learn or maintain skills in order to be able to provide for his or herself and their family upon return.

In all four of the cases evaluated by UNHCR, repatriation was not a solution that was available to all refugees due to human rights issues, political unrest, or land ownership issues in the country of origin. This was especially true for the Rohingya and Eritrean refugees. Repatriation in the case of the Rohingya refugees was particularly troubling because the voluntariness was questioned, which would be in violation of the international law principle of refoulement.

The case in which repatriation was most successful was with Croatian refugees in Serbia. Repatriation was effective in the case of Croatian refugees in Serbia because refugees were able to go back and forth between the two countries. This allowed refugees to stay with their family members and to secure livelihoods and housing. It also led to a successful transition for many refugees, and is an example of a positive way to implement voluntary repatriation. In order to prevent refoulement, repatriation should be used in tandem with other solutions so it is truly a secure and positive outcome for refugees.

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<sup>63</sup> “Protracted Refugee Situations: A Discussion Paper Prepared for the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges,” *Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme* (1). 2008.

### *Resettlement*

Resettlement, when refugees are relocated to a second, usually Western host country, is another durable solution. Large-scale resettlement was not a solution available to any of the refugees in the four cases of PRS evaluated in the decade of initiatives. Although difficult to enact on a large scale, resettlement symbolizes international cooperation and burden sharing. As refugees do not often relocate to Western states, refugee resettlement is one way that Westerners can share the financial burden caused by displacement. Increased resettlement quotas among Western states is called upon in several UNHCR documents on PRS.

For example, the High Commissioner's dialogue advocated for the "strategic use of resettlement."<sup>64</sup> UNHCR argues resettlement can contribute to greater international solidarity by giving a "human face" to the conflict.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, to make resettlement more effective in actually relieving host states of any significant number of refugees, resettlement quotas must be increased. This involves expanding the selection criteria for resettlement and encouraging more countries to open up resettlement spots.

Combinations of repatriation, integration, and resettlement are also encouraged by the UNHCR. One example of when this is be effective is when individuals or groups of refugees have skills they can't use in their country of asylum but are in demand elsewhere. Then, refugees could be admitted to migrant worker or immigration programs in other states.

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<sup>64</sup> "Protracted Refugee Situations: A Discussion Paper Prepared for the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges," 86.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid*, 86.



Another example of this is laid out in the the UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusion on PRS. They argue that in some PRS, host states should offer legal status to refugees who have found their place in a host city and do not wish to return to their country of origin even after it is safe to do so. This is part of the committee's broader goal to recognize that no two cases of PRS are the same, and encourages innovative and creative solutions that fit within specific contexts.

### *Local Integration*

Local integration is the third durable solution that UNHCR has advocated for. In the four evaluations conducted by PDES in the decade of initiatives, local integration was implemented with varying degrees of success. This solution was most successful in Serbia as well as with the first wave of Burundian refugees to Tanzania in 1972. It was less successful in Bangladesh, Eastern Sudan, and with the second wave of refugees that came to Tanzania in the 1990s. The degree of success that local integration is implemented is determined by refugees' ability to enter the labor force as well as their freedom of movement, ability to live outside refugee camps, and acceptance by the host government and local communities.

Local integration is defined by the UNHCR as

...a process whereby refugees establish increasingly closer social and economic links with their host society and are granted a progressively wider range of rights and entitlements by their country of asylum, including the acquisition of permanent residence rights and, ultimately, citizenship.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "Protracted Refugee Situations: A Discussion Paper Prepared for the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges," 59.

In local integration, refugees become a part of their host community, and can enjoy the same rights as the country's citizens.

Included in the UNHCR documents during the decade of initiatives is an emphasis on livelihoods trainings and opportunities and other means for refugees to become self-reliant. The livelihoods approach to integration stands in juxtaposition to the 'care and maintenance' approach used by the UNHCR in past decades. While the care and maintenance approach focused on providing refugees with their basic needs, a livelihoods approach equips refugees with the skills and opportunities to become self-reliant. This idea is reiterated throughout the UNHCR's decade of initiatives on PRS. The High Commissioner's Dialogue argues that, "focusing on the condition of the refugee, and removing obstacles in the way of that person's productivity, are the most effective means of dealing with refugee situations, in absence of a durable solution."<sup>67</sup> An approach that allows refugees to have livelihoods costs less than the traditional care and maintenance approach and allows refugees to live with dignity.

In the 2008 UNHCR Discussion Paper, the committee explains that with the care and maintenance model, armed conflicts have persisted while refugees are left to live in camps indefinitely, leading to human rights violations, poverty, and negative coping mechanisms such as SGBV, trafficking, and the militarization of camps.<sup>68</sup> Instead, if livelihoods are promoted as an alternative, refugees can contribute to the economic life of host countries, the need for costly international relief programs is reduced, positive

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<sup>67</sup> "Protracted Refugee Situations" Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme. (200): 14. Accessed October 30, 2015.

<sup>68</sup> "Protracted Refugee Situations: A Discussion Paper Prepared for the High Commissioner's Dialogue on Protection Challenges" Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (56-57). 2008. Accessed October 12, 2015.

relations between refugees and host communities are promoted, and refugees are able to maintain their dignity.<sup>69</sup>

The Executive Committee Conclusion also highlighted the importance of the shift of providing care and maintenance aid to promoting livelihoods and self-reliance but also acknowledges that incorporating refugees into host states using this model can be challenging. Since many host states are already vulnerable to conflict or have developing economies, they expressed concerns about the amount of support they are receiving from the international community. International burden sharing and responsibility were therefore emphasized as part of encouraging livelihoods.

Serbia and Tanzania in the 1970s allowed for refugees to enter the labor market, which led to a much more successful integration for refugees in both countries. In Serbia, Croatian refugees have access to almost all of the jobs that Serbians do. Although they have lower rates of employment than do Serbians, access to the labor force has allowed many Croatians to become much less reliant on humanitarian aid or even self-sustaining entirely. When the first wave of Burundi refugees entered Tanzania in 1972, they were encouraged to develop agriculture in certain areas and were even given plots of land. This project was very successful, and the refugees became fully self-sustainable and integrated into Tanzania.

When refugees have been prevented from entering the formal labor market, such as in South Sudan, Bangladesh, and Tanzania in the 1990s, refugees have remained dependent on international and local aid, unable to become self-sustaining and often

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<sup>69</sup> “Protracted Refugee Situations: A Discussion Paper Prepared for the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges”, 61-63.

resorting to negative coping mechanisms. As explained in the previous section, when refugees do not have adequate aid and are forbidden to work by their host government, issues such as child labor and early marriage emerge as a way for families to ease their financial hardships.

According to UNHCR, another one of the most important aspects of successful local integration is assuring that the human rights of refugees are respected throughout the process. For example, the 2004 standing committee document makes several suggestions on how to improve refugees' access to their human rights. Host countries must ensure non-refoulement, safe asylum, and personal documentation. Their recommendations also include removing barriers or legal obstacles to self-reliance in host countries such as restrictions on freedom of movement and an inability to own land.

Example of human rights violations such as these are abundant in the PRS evaluated in the decade of initiatives. Restrictions on freedom of movement and property ownership have had negative implications on refugees' ability to integrate into host communities. In Eastern Sudan and Bangladesh in particular, these restrictions have prevented refugees from becoming self-sustaining or traveling to be with family.

The existence of refugee camps also prevents local integration in the long-term. By definition, camps separate refugees from local communities, services, and economy. When refugees are forced to live in camps, or face difficulties obtaining aid outside of the camp setting, they are prevented from becoming a part of the host country's society. In camps, such as in East Sudan, refugees remain dependent on dwindling humanitarian aid. As examined in the previous section, camps are often seen as a way for refugees to be

kept separate from the rest of the country. In camps, services and aid are provided by international aid organizations, so refugees do not put a strain on country resources or job market. However, they also are prevented from contributing their skills and other benefits to the host country and remain dependent on aid.

### *Alternate Solutions*

Outside of the three durable solutions and combinations therein, both UNHCR and academics argue that solutions to PRS must be multi-sectoral and include a wide range of actors across fields. For example, in the 2004 Standing Committee Meeting the committee argues that host communities should not have to bear the burden of integration on their own. Development assistance should work in tandem with humanitarian assistance to strengthen the capacity of host countries to provide protection for refugees and refugee issues should be put on the development agenda. The international community also has the responsibility to provide funding to the UNHCR and host states and refugees with resettlement opportunities.<sup>70</sup>

The 2004 Standing Committee Meeting paper also argued that all efforts to work in PRS should be multi-sectoral and actively engage all actors in creative and innovative ways. This included coordination among UNHCR agencies and “bridging the gap between development services” and humanitarian services<sup>71</sup> Similar to the conclusions drawn in the 2004 Standing Committee paper, the 2008 committee emphasized the idea that they cannot solve PRS alone. There must be coordination between UNHCR and a

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<sup>70</sup> “Protracted Refugee Situations,” *Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme*. (2004).

<sup>71</sup> “Protracted Refugee Situations: A Discussion Paper Prepared for the High Commissioner’s Dialogue on Protection Challenges,” *Executive Committee of the High Commissioner’s Programme*. (2008):25.

wide range of humanitarian and development actors, engagement with refugees, host countries, and countries of origin, and a firm international commitment to establishing high resettlement quotas and making substantial financial contributions.

The Executive Committee Conclusion also stressed the need for reactions to PRS to be “complementary and comprehensive”.<sup>72</sup> Responses should be multi-sectoral, and cooperation is important both within UN groups and between the UNHCR, governments, and NGOs. Despite the divide between member states in the UNHCR Executive Committee, PRS cannot be prevented or resolved without a careful consideration of aid approaches and durable solutions.

In discussing the need for a broader range of actors involved in PRS, Newman and Troeller are quick to point out that that does not mean a greater role for the UNHCR. They explain, “Experiences of UNHCR expanding its role in response to donor requests and changing circumstances have not always proven to be satisfactory and have embroiled the agency in situations in which it had difficulty performing.”<sup>73</sup> At times expansion can even lead UNHCR to act against its original mandate. Instead of the expansion of UNHCR, Newman and Troeller advocate for multilateral action between analysts, advocates, policy makers, and practitioners in addition to discussions between different agencies such as NGOs, UN, and the World Bank.

Academic literature on PRS also calls for increased coordination in addressing the challenges of PRS. Newman and Troeller state, “when actors approach these challenges

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<sup>72</sup>Milner and Loescher, “Responding to Protracted Refugee Situations: Lessons from a Decade of Discussion,” 14.

<sup>73</sup>Gil Loescher, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press. (2008): 383.

independently, they find that their efforts are often inadequate or even in conflict with each other.”<sup>74</sup> Since situations of PRS are so multi-faceted in their causes and consequences, they need to draw upon a wide range of actors and ideas in order to find solutions. UNHCR should engage with other departments of the UN that work in security and development. At a broader level, UNHCR should attempt to engage other stakeholders working in human rights, economic development, and other stakeholders within host countries, countries of origin, and the greater international community. In order to analyze the effectiveness of these solutions, it is important to examine how UNHCR has applied durable solutions in past cases of PRS.

The UNHCR was able to implement innovative solutions to a protracted situation working with the Burundi refugees in Tanzania, especially in how they were able to coordinate with the Tanzanian government.<sup>75</sup> They succeeded in doing this by assisting the Tanzanian government in the logistics of expediting the naturalisation process and “diffusing resistance to naturalisation among local authorities and police and immigration officers, and striking a balance between mitigating xenophobia towards refugees and identifying positive spin-offs.”<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, this was a case in which UNHCR successfully incorporated development actors into their aid and search for solutions.

This was also true of the work with refugees from Croatia in Serbia.<sup>77</sup> At the end of the Balkan Wars in 1995, conditions were not safe for the Serbs to return home.

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<sup>74</sup> Loescher, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications*, 382.

<sup>75</sup> Crisp and Anderson, “Evaluation of the Protracted Refugee Situation (PRS) For Burundians in Tanzania,” 4.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid*, 5.

<sup>77</sup> Allen, Li Rosi, and Skeie, “Should I Stay or Should I Go?: A Review of UNHCR’s Response to the Protracted Refugee Situation in Croatia and Serbia.”

Returnees to Croatia faced many problems including uncertain security and difficulty obtaining livelihoods. As previously discussed, the 2005 Sarajevo Declaration emphasized refugees right to choose where to live and established a forum for main actors to work together for solutions. High Commissioner's 2008 Initiative on PRS reinvigorated this process.

Now, things are looking positive both for the return of Serbs to Croatia and for integration into Serbia. In Serbia, there are no barriers to "employment, education, or citizenship."<sup>78</sup> Mobility between Serbia and Croatia also essential to well-being and lack of poverty among Serb refugees. That way, people can retain their refugee status while working on reintegrating back to Croatia.

In Serbia UNHCR played an important role in encouraging states and the international community to work together on negotiating solutions and create a long-term legal and institutional framework for solving refugee related issues. Mobility is a useful alternative to "the traditional binary paradigm of either integration or voluntary repatriation," and stakeholders should explore capital investments to fund refugee programs, as donor funding will become increasingly rare. Furthermore, UNHCR notes that "the needs of refugees and former refugees will increasingly converge with those of the general population, and future solutions and strategies should take this situation into full account."<sup>79</sup> However, the success UNHCR experienced in Serbia is by no means the rule, and the academic literature on PRS demonstrates the diversity of the issues associated with and possible responses to PRS.

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<sup>78</sup> Allen, Li Rosi, and Skeie, "Should I Stay or Should I Go?: A Review of UNHCR's Response to the Protracted Refugee Situation in Croatia and Serbia." 3.

<sup>79</sup> *ibid*, 3.



Taken as a whole, both the academic and UNHCR literature on PRS present a wide variety of causes, implications, and solutions to the issue. However, it is universally agreed upon by those that study and analyze PRS that it is an issue with huge global consequences with implications that can only worsen if left unattended by the international community. As stated by Newman and Troeller, “While the challenges are considerable, the human and security costs of inaction only increase with time. Only collective political will, underpinning multilateral approaches, can solve these problems”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Gil Loescher, *Protracted Refugee Situations: Political, Human Rights and Security Implications*. Tokyo: United Nations University Press. (2008): 385.

## **Chapter 3: Challenges Facing Syrian Refugees in Jordan**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the challenges facing Syrian refugees in Jordan- in camps and urban areas- and how humanitarian organizations have responded to these challenges. With the purpose of analyzing the Syrian refugee crisis as an example of a PRS, this chapter will allow us to examine how the PRS unfolding in Jordan is similar to or different from other PRS in different parts of the world. Given the ongoing nature of the conflict in Syria, the PRS in Jordan presents a timely opportunity to understand how the international community, host governments, and the displaced are adapting to a PRS, as well as how solutions have been implemented thus far. In addition, this chapter will establish a context in which to later explore potential innovations and solutions that could make the PRS in Jordan a model of humane response to modern humanitarian emergencies. This chapter concludes that as resettlement and repatriation are not large-scale solutions for Syrians at the time of this research, Syrian refugees in Jordan must be given more opportunities to integrate in Jordanian society through full access to public services and the labor market. Rather than encouraging refugees to move to camps, they should be dismantled so Syrians can live lives of dignity, independent from humanitarian aid.

Despite the willingness of the Jordanian government and international aid community to recognize and protect refugees, humanitarian actors and refugees themselves face many difficulties in adapting to the PRS. First, this chapter will discuss

the challenges facing Syrians in refugee camps, such as SGBV and restrictions on leaving camps, and how these issues have led some refugees to return to their homes in Syria. Next, this chapter will examine the unique challenges facing urban refugees, such as barriers entering the labor market, cuts in food and health care aid, and integrating into host communities; they have dealt with these challenges by engaging in illegal employment, including child labor, and early marriage. Finally, this chapter will examine the success and failure of UNHCR's three sustainable solutions to PRS in this situation.

### *Context*

Before examining the humanitarian responses to the PRS it is necessary to understand the broader context of the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan. The first Syrians arrived in Jordan in 2011, after the Syrian uprising began in March. While some local aid organizations like Islamic Relief provided assistance to Syrians in northern Jordan, the Jordanian government didn't officially recognize the Syrians as refugees until 2012 when Syrians began entering in greater numbers. In 2012, an average of 1,000 Syrians entered Jordan each day.<sup>81</sup> The number of refugees began to level off in the second half of 2013, "due in part to the difficulty of getting to Jordan through disputed territories along the southern Syrian border."<sup>82</sup>

As of March 2016, there were 636,040 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan, although the Jordanian government estimates that the total number of Syrians in Jordan is much higher, up to 1.4 million. The refugee influx represents 8% of Jordan's total

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<sup>81</sup> "Jordan," *Syrian Refugees*, Accessed March 19, 2016. [http://syrianrefugees.eu/?page\\_id=87](http://syrianrefugees.eu/?page_id=87)

<sup>82</sup> "Syrian Regional Response," *UNHCR*, Accessed March 19, 2016. <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=107>

population, and is the equivalent of the US admitting 29.4 million refugees over the course of four years.<sup>83</sup>

The majority of Syrians live in host communities, mainly in the poorest northern municipalities in the governorates in Amman, Mafraq, and Irbid.<sup>84</sup> 120,131 reside in Za'atari and Azraq refugee camps, representing about 19% of the total refugee population.<sup>85</sup> Za'atari, located in the governorate of Mafraq, was established in July 2012 as the first Syrian refugee camp in Jordan. Although Za'atari had a maximum capacity of 60,000, the population ballooned to 120,000 only a year after it opened. Over the course of the past few years, Za'atari has evolved into something like a small city, with supermarkets, businesses, and a main street nicknamed the Champs Elysees. The Azraq camp, located in the governorate of Zarqa, was created in response to the huge number of refugees overwhelming Za'atari in April 2014. Azraq lacks many of the opportunities available for refugees in Za'atari, with limited electricity, no floors in shelters, and few business opportunities for refugees. As of October 2014, Azraq was accepting 96-97% of all new arrivals to Jordan.<sup>86</sup> In March 2016, there was a total of 79,559 refugees in Za'atari and 34,154 refugees in Azraq.<sup>87</sup>

The response of the Jordanian government to the refugees has been essentially generous, especially in the beginning of the crisis. Although Jordan is not a signatory of

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<sup>83</sup> Doris Carrion, "Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Confronting Difficult Truths" *Chatham House*. (2015): 3.

<sup>84</sup> Alexandra Francis, "Jordan's Refugee Crisis" *Carnegie International Endowment for Peace*. (2015): 7.

<sup>85</sup> "Syrian Regional Response," *UNHCR*, Accessed March 19, 2016.

<sup>86</sup> Adam Ramsey, "Thousands of Syrian Refugees are Desperate to Escape the Camps that Give them Shelter," *Newsweek*. (2014). Accessed March 19, 2016.

<http://www.newsweek.com/2014/10/17/jordan-thousands-syrian-refugees-are-now-desperate-escape-camps-gave-them-276043.html>

<sup>87</sup> "Syrian Regional Response," *UNHCR*, Accessed March 19, 2016.

the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the government refers to Syrians as refugees, and they have granted Syrians access to services in host communities such as healthcare and education. Syrians were even given free healthcare at Jordanian public hospitals until November 2014.<sup>88</sup> Without national or international legal instruments regarding refugees, UNHCR and the Jordanian government created a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’, amended in 2014, that established the parameters of cooperation of UNHCR and the government. UNHCR Jordan country webpage states that in Jordan the “protection space is generally favorable, although fragile owing to the country’s own socioeconomic challenges.”<sup>89</sup> While the government has welcomed refugees into its borders and provided them with certain services and access to public goods, their response has been limited by the country’s already strained resources.

In Jordan, UNHCR coordinates with the government, NGOs, and other UN agencies to provide humanitarian relief to refugees, including shelter, food, protection, and psychosocial support. Their central inter-agency appeal is the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP). 3RP is coordinated through UNHCR, NGOs, and the governments of Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt. The 3RP sets a common strategy for all humanitarian actors, including the government. The response plan is supported by over 200 inter-sector working groups throughout the region, which coordinate humanitarian action by sectors such as shelter, water and sanitation, and child protection. These working groups then report to task forces led by the heads of humanitarian agencies and

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<sup>88</sup> From 2012 until November 2014 Syrians received free healthcare at Jordanian public hospitals. After November 2014 Syrians pay the same as uninsured Jordanians for healthcare at public hospitals. Francis, “Jordan’s Refugee Crisis,” 5.

<sup>89</sup> “2015 Country Operations Profile- Jordan,” *UNHCR*, Accessed March 19, 2015. <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486566.html>

chaired by UNHCR. In Jordan, UNHCR has significantly expanded their efforts and presence since the beginning of the Syrian refugee crisis; their operating budget has expanded from \$62.8 million in 2010 to \$404.4 million in 2015.<sup>90</sup>

### **3.2 Refugee Camps**

While Syrians living in Jordanian refugee camps may have an easier time accessing humanitarian aid and programming than urban refugees, they still face challenges specific to life in refugee camps. This section will analyze the difficulties facing refugees in Jordanian camps in regards to SGBV, restrictions on leaving camps, and general quality of life. As a result of these difficulties, some Syrians have chosen to return to Syria. However, before examining these issues, it is important to note that there are also important benefits for some refugees choosing to live in camps rather than host communities.

#### *Benefits of Refugee Camps*

For some refugees, there are important benefits to living in camps when compared to urban areas. These benefits are largely due to the availability and accessibility of essential goods and services inside of camps. One aid worker commented that despite harsh living conditions in camps, refugees living there would at least have their basic

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<sup>90</sup> *ibid*

needs met, including shelter, healthcare, UNHCR-run schools, and food from WFP vouchers.<sup>91</sup> Another humanitarian worker commented,

And if you're inside a camp, the image we have in international media and everything is that camps are horrendous and people cannot get out and stuff but actually every service and everything you might need in the camp is accessible... they know who to talk to when they have a problem.<sup>92</sup>

While distributing aid and providing information is a major challenge for both urban refugees and humanitarian organizations, in camps aid is easier to access and some form of housing and school is guaranteed.

Another reason that some humanitarians thought it was beneficial for some refugees to live in camps rather than urban areas is because in camps, problems associated with host community integration are absent. In camps like Za'atari, there are opportunities for Syrians to shop, go to school, and live among other Syrians. One humanitarian workers said, "In the camps, [refugees] believe they are one community and they are living together as one nation... They don't feel the tension, like they are taking [Jordanians'] opportunities."<sup>93</sup> While life in a refugee camp may limit opportunities for refugees, it does allow them to live in community with other Syrians. While these benefits are important, especially for vulnerable refugee populations, there are also challenges and difficulties associated with living in refugee camps in Jordan.

### *Protection Challenges*

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<sup>91</sup> Interview 9

<sup>92</sup> Interview 4

<sup>93</sup> Interview 6

Some humanitarian workers argued that there are protection challenges specific to refugee camps that are not present in host communities. Women in Jordanian refugee camps are at risk of experiencing GBV. This is due in part to the shelter arrangements in refugee camps. For example, one aid worker said, “It’s not a safe place to sleep for the night. You don’t have a door. You don’t have security.”<sup>94</sup> Another aid worker commented that cramped conditions in refugee camps has caused increased family tensions and domestic violence.<sup>95</sup>

The reason women face increased levels of violence in refugee camps is because of the lack of security present in camps and women’s fears of their safety if they report incidents of GBV. According to a Humanity in Action report, “The lack of security in refugee camps naturally lends itself to increased instances of violence. There is little to no protection for women. Some women fear that if they report abuse or violence, their husbands will send them back to Syria.”<sup>96</sup> While the UNFPA and the Jordanian Ministry of Health have worked to improve care for victims of SGBV, information and care for victims is still limited.<sup>97</sup>

### *Restrictions on Leaving Camps*

Restrictions on leaving refugee camps in Jordan is another key challenge for Syrian refugees. Jordanian government policies, largely beginning in the second half of

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<sup>94</sup> Interview 2

<sup>95</sup> Interview 1

<sup>96</sup>Somari, Goleen, “The Response to Syrian Refugee Women’s Health Needs in Lebanon, Turkey, and in Jordan and Recommendations for Improved Practice,” Humanity in Action. Accessed March 10, 2016. <http://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/583-the-response-to-syrian-refugee-women-s-health-need-s-in-lebanon-turkey-and-jordan-and-recommendations-for-improved-practice>

<sup>97</sup>Somari, Accessed March 10, 2016.



2014, have made it increasingly difficult for Syrian refugees to move from camps to host communities. These restrictions make it necessary for Syrians to pay a fee and have a Jordanian relation, although not necessarily a blood relative, act as their guarantor and vouch for them as they begin their life in a Jordanian host community.<sup>98</sup> These permits can be very difficult to get and may involve long wait periods.

This poses serious problems for Syrian refugees who do not have the money or connections to be bailed out by a Jordanian. Several aid workers emphasized the challenges these restrictions present to most Syrians in Jordan. One aid worker declared,

The most challenging restriction right now is the lack of freedom of movement. If Syrians want to move outside of the camps they can't re-register with UNHCR unless they are bailed out by a Jordanian. So only those with connections in Jordan and money have the ability to leave the camps and still receive any aid.<sup>99</sup>

It is therefore clear that these policies restrict the freedom of Syrian refugees, those without these connections or resources, forcing them to stay in refugee camps for the foreseeable future.

Furthermore, the consequences for leaving without following the bailout procedures can be devastating. If Syrians choose to leave the camps without official permission, they become ineligible for aid once they settle in urban areas. *Newsweek* reports,

According to the latest rules unregistered refugees, and those who choose to leave the confines of the camps without official authorisation, find themselves cut off from any humanitarian assistance, and at risk of being deported to Syria. The choice presented to these refugees is simple: stay in the camps, or give up access to aid.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>Ramsey, "Thousands of Syrian Refugees are Desperate to Escape the Camps that Give them Shelter."

<sup>99</sup> Interview 21

<sup>100</sup>Ramsey, "Thousands of Syrian Refugees are Desperate to Escape the Camps that Give them Shelter."

In October 2014, it was estimated that 13,000 refugees, half of the population of the Azraq camp at the time, had left the camp without going through the proper bailout procedures enforced by the Jordanian government. Under these policies, none of them are able to access the international humanitarian aid in host communities that are coordinated through UNHCR.

One humanitarian worker described it this way, “The government decided that they needed to be involved in everything and created the Refugee Affairs Department. Now things are more controlled by the government. Now it is hard to go back to urban areas and leave the camps.”<sup>101</sup> The decision of the Jordanian government to enforce these policies restricts the freedom of movement and protection space of Syrian refugees.

### *Dignity and Life in Camps*

Another challenge for refugees living in camps is an inability to create a normal life because camps are located far from major urban areas and most refugees are completely dependent on aid. In the interviews with humanitarian workers across sectors in Jordan, it was widely argued that refugees were able to live fuller, more dignified lives in urban areas rather than in refugee camps. Interviewees repeatedly discussed refugee camps in Jordan as a place where living a ‘normal’ life was impossible, citing an inability to integrate into Jordanian society and a lack of dignity.

The Syrian refugee camps in Jordan are located far from major urban areas, separating refugees in camps from any regular contact with Jordanian host communities.

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<sup>101</sup> Interview 19

One humanitarian worker described interactions they had with Syrians who had been living in camps, explaining that Syrian refugees in camps “don’t have the opportunity to interact with people from the outside. When I meet with people inside the camp they say, ‘I want to take a leave and go to Jordan,’ and I’m like ‘but you are in Jordan’.”<sup>102</sup> This contradiction illustrates an important point. Refugees positioned in refugee camps far from other urban areas in Jordan are left in limbo; they cannot establish a life in their country of origin or their host country.

An inability to work and earn an income are also among the primary frustrations expressed by refugees living in camps. In an interview with *Newsweek* in October 2014, Syrian refugees stated their frustrations in having to rely on aid from refugee camps for years. One refugee stated, “There is only so long you can live off [handouts]. I feel I am living half a life here.”<sup>103</sup> Another refugee reiterated this idea, claiming, “In order to live in dignity, you have to work,” he says. “That’s why we prefer to live [outside], even with all the risks involved.”<sup>104</sup> Frustrations with the restrictions of camp life were echoed in interviews with aid workers that worked directly with refugees in camps. Some interviewees used terms related to incarceration to describe the conditions of refugee camps, describing a camp as a “jail”<sup>105</sup> and the status of refugees in camps as “arrested.”<sup>106</sup> Without opportunities to work, even illegally in the informal labor market, life in the camps was also described as tedious. One humanitarian worker explained, “People in the

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<sup>102</sup> Interview 6

<sup>103</sup> Ramsey, “Thousands of Syrian Refugees are Desperate to Escape the Camps that Give them Shelter.”

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> Interview 4

<sup>106</sup> Interview 13

camp are always looking for something to do. These people all had lives... This idleness, in my opinion, is very bad.”<sup>107</sup>

As a result of the many issues and challenges facing Syrian refugees in camps, some refugees have decided to move back to Syria, despite risks of violence and political instability. The number of Syrians leaving Jordan now far outnumber the Syrians entering Jordan. In the fall of 2015, thirty to seventy-five Syrian refugees entered Jordan each day. Meanwhile, 3,853 refugees returned to Syria in August 2015, compared to 1,934 in the previous month.<sup>108</sup>

News reports detail many individual stories of families returning to Syria via a bus from the Za’atari camp. Before leaving, they are encouraged to get counseling from UNHCR. In an interview with BBC News, one of the protection officers at Za’atari stated, "The first thing we tell them is that there's no safe place in Syria from a UNHCR perspective," says Omar, one of the protection officers. "The second is that you can't return back to Jordan at all. It's a one-way ticket."<sup>109</sup> Even with the huge risks associated with leaving and the finality of their choice, Syrians list being unable to work and receiving inadequate aid as reasons they compelled to return home.

Syrians living in Jordanian refugee camps, while enjoying certain benefits in accessing aid, face several key challenges, in particular increased risk of GBV, restrictions on leaving camps, and an inability to build a normal life. As a result, some

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<sup>107</sup> Interview 9

<sup>108</sup> Karin Laub, “Syrian Refugees Increasingly Return to War Zones in Homeland,” AP (2015). Accessed March 1, 2015. <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/67bf2a2a200847be818364a205f3776a/syrian-refugees-increasingly-return-war-zones-homeland>

<sup>109</sup> Yolande Knell, “Desperate Syrian Refugees Return to War Zone,” BBC (2015). Accessed March 1, 2015. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34504418>

have resorted to returning to the country they had fled due to violence and political instability. Now that we have examined the issues facing refugees in camps, it is critical to study the challenges that urban refugees must confront in light of the protracted situation.

### **3.3 Urban Refugees**

Urban refugees comprise the vast majority of Syrian refugees living in Jordan today. Over 80% of Jordan's 636,040<sup>110</sup> registered Syrian refugees live in host communities. Living in host communities, urban refugees face distinct challenges in creating a life in Jordan with limited resources and significant barriers to employment. Their dependency on aid from humanitarian groups and the Jordanian government has upset many Jordanians, 80% of whom believe that all Syrian refugees in Jordan should have to live in refugee camps.<sup>111</sup> In order to analyze the many challenges facing urban refugees in Jordan and how they have responded, this section will first examine how aid is prioritized in camps rather than urban areas. Next, this section will analyze the barriers to employment facing Syrian refugees, and then investigate the issues for refugees integrating into Jordanian host communities. Finally, this section will show how these challenges have led to negative coping mechanisms such as child labor and early marriage.

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<sup>110</sup> "Syrian Regional Response," *UNHCR*.

<sup>111</sup> Ramsey, "Thousands of Syrian Refugees are Desperate to Escape the Camps that Give them Shelter."

### *Funding Camps v Funding Urban Refugees*

One challenge for urban refugees is that humanitarian organizations often prioritize aid in camps over aid in urban areas. As stated in the introduction of this chapter, 83% of Syrian refugees live in urban areas rather than camps. However, as a result of constricting budget cuts, aid organizations almost always prioritize refugees in camps over refugees in urban areas. For example, the cuts to both the WFP programs and the free healthcare provided by the Jordanian government affected only refugees in urban areas; refugees in camps still receive the full food voucher and free medical care from other humanitarian organizations. Some organizations stated that camps were prioritized over urban areas because in a city refugees have more options to generate an income and provide for themselves, even if employment is illegal.<sup>112</sup> However, there were additional reasons that organizations consistently prioritize funding in camps over urban areas. From an organizational standpoint, it is easier to attract and maintain contact with refugees, and from a governmental standpoint, having humanitarian organizations provide for refugees in contained camps puts less of a strain on host communities. As a result, by January 2015, the numbers of Syrian refugees living in Za'atari camp has increased from 79,000 to 85,000 and thousands more may also be forced to return to refugee camps in Jordan.<sup>113</sup>

According to several of the humanitarian workers interviewed, aid organizations have a difficult time finding and determining services for refugees in urban areas. One

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<sup>112</sup> Interview 1

<sup>113</sup> Teresa Welsh, "Syrian Refugees Move Back to Camps in Jordan," *US News and World Report*, (2015). Accessed March 15, 2016.  
<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/01/28/syrian-refugees-move-back-to-camps-in-jordan>

interviewee described the challenges for aid organizations in locating and addressing the needs of Syrian refugees, complaining that in “towns and villages, you have to go there and knock on the doors and say ‘Are you Syrians?’ ... It’s much harder to monitor... what their needs are and design projects based on their needs.”<sup>114</sup> In camps, aid is centrally located and it is easier for refugees to express their needs to humanitarian groups. It is also difficult to advertise services to refugees living alongside millions of Jordanian families, especially if they are not registered with the UNHCR. Refugee families may move from city to city, depending on where they have connections, and not return to an organization they had previously connected with. There may also be expenses, such as taxi rides, for refugees to even get to services sites, preventing them from going in the first place. These issues create problems for humanitarian organizations who must report high attendance numbers for psychosocial activities and other such projects for donors who have many organizations that they can choose to fund.

One humanitarian worker described how his organization, which works with children, used small present to try to keep children in their program. He said, “In order to attract kids they provide gifts or other incentives. They need children to come to the program so they have higher numbers to report to donors. In camps it is easier to attract people.”<sup>115</sup> In camps, where refugees are located in a single area, it is easy for aid organizations to advertise their services and stay connected with refugees, thereby conserving their time and resources.

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<sup>114</sup> Interview 4

<sup>115</sup> Interview 20

From the perspective of the government, it is beneficial for more refugees to live in camps, rather than in Jordanian host communities, because then they will not use as many shared resources or rely on government run services and infrastructure. One aid organization employee even argued that one of the existing camps is built to hold far more refugees than currently live there, and that the government wants to keep refugees out of cities where they might provide security challenges for the state or take jobs away from Jordanians. They stated, “The funds will definitely continue for refugees in camps. Azraq camp has the capacity to hold up to 70,000 refugees, and there’s only a few thousand there now. This will motivate people to go back to camps, which is what the government wants.”<sup>116</sup> In an interview with *US News and World Report*, Emily Acer of Human Rights First claimed, “By cutting off medical assistance, that’s one way to push some refugees to potentially go back to camps and out of urban areas... There’s some concern that some of the cuts by the Jordanian government may be partly aimed at pushing people back into camps.”<sup>117</sup> Lack of resources in urban areas is one way to encourage refugees to remain in camps, which may have benefits for a host government that is already facing severe strains on its resources and infrastructure. In order to better understand how aid organizations are prioritizing aid in camps over aid in urban areas, it is important to examine the cuts to food aid by the WFP and healthcare by the Jordanian government.

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<sup>116</sup> Interview 20

<sup>117</sup> Welsh, “Syrian Refugees Move Back to Camps in Jordan.”



### *Funding Shortages*

One of the central challenges facing urban refugees has been cuts to the aid they received. Between 2011 and 2015, key aid and services to Syrian refugees were reduced or cut altogether due to funding shortages. In June 2015, only 23% of the money requested in Jordan's 2015-2016 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan had been funded; \$272 million of \$1.2 billion budget had been met.<sup>118</sup> As stated by the Brookings Institute, "Confronted with limited donor engagement, Jordan will continue to tighten the restrictions around Syrian admission and service provision, with dire consequences for refugees."<sup>119</sup> Jordan's funding crisis then becomes, in the words of one interviewee, the "crux" of many of the other problems facing humanitarian actors and Syrian refugees.<sup>120</sup> One organization in particular that has struggled to provide adequate aid in light of significant funding shortages is the World Food Program (WFP).

WFP, a humanitarian branch of the UN that focuses on fighting hunger worldwide, has had to drastically cut back the amount of money they give to each refugee family as well as reduce the number of families overall that they are assisting due to consistent funding shortfalls. According to a WFP report in 2015, consistent funding shortfalls forced them to make repeated cuts to the value of the food vouchers given to Syrian refugees in Jordan, and even had to stop giving assistance all together to some families categorized as "vulnerable" in September 2015; "extremely vulnerable" refugees had their voucher value cut in half.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Francis, "Jordan's Refugee Crisis," 10.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid*, 25.

<sup>120</sup> Interview 5

<sup>121</sup> "The Impact of WFP Cuts on Vulnerable Syrian Refugees in Jordanian Communities," *World Food Program*, (2015). Accessed October 15, 2015.

According to the WFP in December 2015, these cutbacks have had serious impacts on the vulnerability of Syrian households. WFP reported that, “Results were drastic, with the number of households with poor food consumption rising steeply from zero to twenty-seven percent in a matter of weeks.”<sup>122</sup> Other consequences emphasized in the October 2015 WFP report include half of the Syrian families interviewed said they would consider leaving Jordan for Europe or Syria, and 75% of families reported engaging in negative coping mechanisms to deal with the voucher cuts, including taking children out of school and sending them to work, borrowing money, and begging.<sup>123</sup>

These consequences were emphasized in an interview with one WFP employee who claimed she had personally worked with women that had had to resort to negative coping mechanisms as a result in the WFP cuts. She explained, “Unfortunately the results are really heartbreaking. Some people have actually sent their kids to beg. I was talking to this woman and she said for the first time ever since I came to Jordan two years ago I took my kids to the nearest traffic light and started begging.”<sup>124</sup>

An additional challenge for refugees purchasing food, added the WFP employee, is that food prices in Jordan are some of the highest in the region. Amman in particular is one of the most expensive cities in which to buy food. While in Syria you could live off of vegetables and potatoes, that is often too expensive for refugees to purchase here. Instead they rely on rice and bread that is heavily subsidized by the government, resulting in nutrient deficiency for many refugees.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> “WFP Jordan Brief,” *WFP* (2015). Accessed Dec. 31, 2015.

<sup>123</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Interview 10

<sup>125</sup> Interview 10

The funding shortages experienced by humanitarian organizations such as WFP have significant consequences for refugees and force organizations to make decisions about who to prioritize and what programs to fund with their limited resources. The cuts experienced by WFP is an example how a prominent international aid organization copes with funding shortages, but it is also important to look at how the host government alters their humanitarian programs in light of strained resources.

Another key humanitarian sector that experienced funding cuts in Jordan is healthcare. In late 2014, the Jordanian government ended its program that gave Syrian refugees free health care in public hospitals, instead treating them as uninsured Jordanians.<sup>126</sup> Having already spent \$21.5 million on providing Syrians with free healthcare, the government argued that they could no longer afford to do so. In an interview with *US News and World Report* published in January 2015, one UNHCR employee explained that, “the government of Jordan is making these decisions based on the fact that they’re just overwhelmed... Obviously it’s an unfortunate decision, but it’s hard not to see the strain that’s on Jordan for its own budget and meeting the needs of its own population.”<sup>127</sup> According to humanitarian workers and NGO reports, this change has led to a “notable restriction in protection space” for many different groups.<sup>128</sup> Fewer Syrians are guaranteed access to necessities, like medical assistance, making them more vulnerable to illness and more likely to be forced into negative coping mechanisms.

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<sup>126</sup> “Syrian Refugees Warn They Have No Choice But to Return to Syria After Aid Cuts to Food, Health,” *International Rescue Committee*, (Jan. 2014). Accessed March 1, 2016. <http://www.rescue.org/press-releases/syrian-refugees-warn-they-have-no-choice-return-syria-after-aid-cuts-food-health-2262>

<sup>127</sup> Welsh, “Syrian Refugees Move Back to Camps in Jordan.”

<sup>128</sup> Francis, “Jordan’s Refugee Crisis,” 21.

Refugees with prior illnesses or disabilities are particularly affected by this policy change. Without them or their family members having access to an income or government support, refugees with a disability or prior sickness face many hardships. One interviewee stated, “The disabled people are having a hard time. It is difficult to afford things like wheelchairs and hearing aids. There is a lack of funding for items like these and they are hard to find.”<sup>129</sup> Another interviewee discussed the problems facing a boy he worked with who had cerebral palsy. Without the free government healthcare, the boy was reliant on the services of NGOs who often ran short on funds. At this particular health-related NGO, they were only able to provide the boy with care expenses for three months until his care exceeded the amount of money per person the NGO could spend, leaving him without much needed medical attention.<sup>130</sup> Besides suffering from inadequate healthcare, urban refugees also are seeing an increased amount of psychosocial support programming at the expense of material aid.

### *Psychosocial Support Programming*

Many humanitarian organizations have responded to the PRS by creating more psychosocial support programming rather than distributing material aid or cash. There are two reasons for this. First, donors to humanitarian aid organizations encourage this type of programming because psychosocial support programming is supposed to help refugees in the long-term. In addition, humanitarian aid organizations are often able to help a greater quantity of refugees with psychosocial support than material support because it

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<sup>129</sup> Interview 19

<sup>130</sup> Interview 14

may be cheaper or easier to provide. This in turn allows them to report that they helped greater numbers of refugees to donors. As a result, some aid workers report that refugees have expressed dissatisfaction at receiving psychosocial support rather than material aid.

Psychosocial support is broadly defined by aid organizations, and there were many different varieties and types of psychosocial support activities provided by the groups interviewed. These included individual and group therapy as well as other activities more broadly related to well-being, such as organized sports or art activities for children or skill building activities for adults. Sometimes, the types of activities carried out are heavily influenced by the type of grant the organizations receives.

Some interviewees also suggested that psychosocial support programming was driven by donor encouragement rather than by the needs of Syrian refugees. One humanitarian worker commented,

In 2015 we added life skills and informal education to our programming. Since they got more grants from the same two donors, they needed to mix up their activities. They are trying to highlight how their psychosocial programming is a “complete package” by including informal education and life skills.<sup>131</sup>

The worker’s comments show how psychosocial support can be a catchall term for any programming that isn’t material aid in the form of cash, food, or other assistance. The worker’s words also demonstrate how at times humanitarian aid can reflect the will of the donors rather than the needs of the population being assisted.

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<sup>131</sup> Interview 20

Furthermore, one humanitarian worker argued that psychosocial support programs were actually a way for aid organizations to say that they were doing more than they actually were to help refugees. They claim,

Psychosocial activities are popular because they sound good but don't require a lot of effort or money. Specific donors like UNICEF love programs that support 'well being', so an activity like a simple football match is counted by an NGO as a psychosocial activity, even though it is just a football game.<sup>132</sup>

According to this argument, rather than helping the mental health of children and adult refugees, psychosocial support distracted organizations and donors from providing them with the tangible support they need to survive. The Terre des Hommes employee even goes as far as to say, "For NGOs, it is a matter of achieving your targets and making donors happy- otherwise they'll get less funding in their future. That is what they care about."<sup>133</sup>

This idea was reiterated by another humanitarian worker who discussed the dissatisfaction of some of the refugees they worked with. They claimed that while the refugees served by the humanitarian organization were happy with the services, the refugees expressed the need for more material support and basic services rather than psychosocial support programming. The worker described an encounter he has with one Syrian man who had been living in Jordan for several years and was concerned for his son's future. He said this man explained to him, "It's not about today, it's not about the psychosocial support you are providing for my sons, it's about when my sons want to go to college, how can I afford this."<sup>134</sup> Left without material support or their basic needs

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<sup>132</sup> Interview 18

<sup>133</sup> Interview 20

<sup>134</sup> Interview 6

met, some refugees have little interest in the psychosocial support that is becoming increasingly popular among aid organizations.

The humanitarian response to the refugee crisis has been shaped by severe funding shortages that have especially affected urban refugees, as seen in the changes in WFP programming, the end of free healthcare for Syrian refugees provided by the Jordanian government, and the shift to psychosocial support programming. One reason this issue is particularly challenging is because refugees living in host communities also face legal barriers to employment and self-sufficiency.

### *Barriers to Employment*

Among the most significant challenges facing Syrian refugees in Jordan is the barriers they face to employment. Syrian refugees work in many different sectors of the informal labor market, but at least 20% of Syrian refugees who are employed work illegally in informal sector jobs such as agriculture, construction, food services, and retail.<sup>135</sup> Many humanitarian workers speculated that this number is actually much higher. Prostitution, trafficking, and the sale and trade of relief assistance are other forms of illegal labor performed by Syrians in Jordan.<sup>136</sup> Regardless of the position or sector, refugees are paid lower wages than Jordanians, and they don't receive the same benefits as Jordanians who work in the formal market.<sup>137</sup>

While work permits exist, they are prohibitively expensive for most refugees and require the sponsorship of an employer. As most Syrians in the country are unable to

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<sup>135</sup> Carrion, "Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Confronting Difficult Truths," 9.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid*, 9.

<sup>137</sup> Interview 8

work legally and enjoy an income, they are vulnerable to a whole host of other problems. Almost all of the humanitarian workers interviewed described refugees' inability to legally enter the Jordanian workforce as the greatest challenge facing Syrians, as a lack of income has led to many of the other problems facing Syrian refugees.

Syrians choose or are forced to seek illegal employment for a variety of reasons. One of the reasons Syrian refugees may seek illegal employment despite the hardships and consequences has to do with the protracted nature of the refugee crisis in Jordan. While refugees may have arrived in Jordan with savings, for many those savings have been depleted over the course of several years. One humanitarian worker commented, "They find work. Even if it's illegal they find work and start working. Because it is impossible to be here for two or three years."<sup>138</sup> Syrian refugees will go to great lengths to make ends meet for themselves and their families, even if they must work low paying jobs and risk being caught by Jordanian authorities.

One risk discussed by several humanitarian employees was being caught by the Jordanian police and then being sent back to Syria or to one of the refugee camps inside of Jordan. The Chatham House Royal Institute of International affairs declared, "Although the government often tolerates informal Syrian labor, some Syrians caught working have been imprisoned, fined, forced to relocate to camps or even deported. Cases of refoulement were reported by several other humanitarian workers as well. One reported, "They aren't able to obtain work permits, and that puts them in a lot of danger because they work illegally. That can put them under all types of exploitation, they can

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<sup>138</sup> Interview 2



be taken advantage of in the wrong way.”<sup>139</sup> Refoulement is especially dangerous in the case of Syrian refugees in Jordan because if they return to Syria they will be denied readmittance to Jordan.<sup>140</sup>

### *Host Community Integration*

Like barriers to employment, integrating into Jordanian host communities is a central challenge for Syrians in Jordan, but one that is vital to their survival in light of the protracted situation. Although Syrians initially received a warm welcome from Jordanian citizens and the government, “patience and generosity in host communities has worn thin as refugees compete with Jordan’s vulnerable populations for scarce resources, employment opportunities, shelter healthcare, and education.”<sup>141</sup> Despite providing certain benefits to the host communities and receiving initial support from Jordanians, host community tensions exist between Jordanians and Syrians due to pre-existing economic conditions, political instability, and negative public perceptions of refugees. This is compounded by the strain Syrians have placed on Jordan’s limited resources and infrastructure.

Before examining the specific areas of tension between refugees and host communities, it is important to note that Syrian refugees have brought several benefits to Jordanian host communities and many Jordanians continue to be welcoming and generous to their Syrian neighbors. For example, the influx of refugees have allowed

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<sup>139</sup> Interview 9

<sup>140</sup> Francis, “Jordan’s Refugee Crisis,” 26.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid*, 7.

property owners to raise rent prices and some Syrians have opened businesses in the country with Jordanian partners.<sup>142</sup>

In addition, several interviewees mentioned the tribal or familial connections between Syrians and Jordanians, particularly in Northern Jordan. One humanitarian worker stated,

As I said, the Jordanian government has been very generous to Syrian refugees and in our village we are very lucky because the Jordanian tribes that reside in this village and the families from Syria that settled here are actually from the same tribes. So there are bonds that are above the nationality thing.<sup>143</sup>

Other interviewees agreed, saying that many Syrians are supported by Jordanian family members. They argue that while minor tensions exist, Jordanians on the whole have been very welcoming of Syrian refugees.<sup>144</sup> However, prior to the arrival of Syrian refugees, Jordan was already facing serious political and financial problems as a result of a fragile political structure and the 2008 financial crisis. These issues have complicated the government response to the refugee influx.

Although the government was not forced to make any large concessions after the Arab Spring, the refugee influx may pose challenges for the Jordanian monarchy in the long-term. Jordan has long been seen by the US and other countries as a key ally in the region and an island of stability when conflict has arisen among its neighboring countries. Jordan is a parliamentary monarchy led by the Hashemite king, Abdullah II, and a prime minister. The monarchy's power lies primarily in its support from East Bank Bedouin tribes that also make up much of Jordan's security forces. This has led to a divide

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<sup>142</sup> Carrion, "Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Confronting Difficult Truths," 4.

<sup>143</sup> Interview 4

<sup>144</sup> Interview 7 & 8

between the East Bank Jordanians who hold much of the political power and the Palestinians who are politically marginalized but also make up some of the country's financial elite. However, this divide has yet to lead to any serious changes in the composition of the government, even after the Arab Spring.

Although there were public protests in 2011 during the Arab Spring, they failed to garner as many people or media attention as the protests going on in neighboring countries, and the government got away without altering the political structure of the government. As a result, the Jordanian monarchy “easily undercut the movement’s popular reform platform through traditional Hashemite methods of political appeasement, and the protests dwindled in the second half of 2011.”<sup>145</sup> While the Arab Spring did not lead to many new changes for Jordan, the country was significantly affected by the regional instability of that time, which led to the influx of Syrian refugees.

In some ways, the largely negative public response to the influx of Syrian refugees has provided the government with a scapegoat for many of Jordan’s pre-existing issues, especially problems related to the country’s strained resources and infrastructure. Many Jordanians blamed the Syrian refugee crisis on their problems related to rent prices, over-crowded schools, and high rates of unemployment. However, this seems to be changing as the crisis enters its fifth year with no end to the Syrian conflict in sight. As the prospect of resolution in the near future becomes increasingly unlikely, and refugees continue to enter the country, “public disenchantment has turned back toward the Jordanian government.”<sup>146</sup> Syrians in Jordan live among the most vulnerable Jordanians,

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<sup>145</sup> Francis, “Jordan’s Refugee Crisis,” 3.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid*, 3.

and the issues that have been exacerbated by the influx have highlighted the struggles faced by marginalized Jordanians.

In this way, the instability and challenges caused by the Syrian refugee crisis may mobilize marginalized Jordanian groups that have been excluded from power by the East Bank Bedouin tribes such as Palestinians and Iraqi and Syrian refugees. This would shift the target of public dissatisfaction from the refugees to the Jordanian government. As popular frustration increases, “political conflict is increasingly framed as a struggle against disenfranchisement.”<sup>147</sup> Therefore, in the long-term, it is essential for the stability of the existing Jordanian government and monarchy to continue to blame the country’s problems on the refugees in order to maintain the existing political order and contentment of the public.

In addition to political issues, Jordan faces economic challenges as a result of the Arab Spring. Jordan is a resource-poor country without major industry, and “relies on foreign assistance for economic stability, rendering its economy extremely vulnerable to exogenous economic shocks”<sup>148</sup> For example, it reduced the amount of “direct investment and private capital flows” to Amman from major trading partners or donors such as the U.S.<sup>149</sup> Therefore, the 2008 global financial crisis had a negative impact on Jordan’s economy by reducing the amount of money that was invested in both the public and private sector.

The Arab Spring also contributed to the economic instability of Jordan leading up to the Syrian refugee crisis. In general, the uprisings and protests of the Arab Spring gave

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<sup>147</sup>Francis, “Jordan’s Refugee Crisis,” 3.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid*, 11.

<sup>149</sup> Yusuf Mansour, “Impact of the Financial Crisis on Jordan,” July 9, 2011.

way to a financial downturn in Jordan as a result of “declining global commodity prices, restricted exports, and reduced remittances.”<sup>150</sup> It also led to a destabilization of trade with Jordan’s regional trading partners, such as their imports of oil from Egypt. Since Syrian refugees entered Jordan on the tale of both the Arab Spring and the 2008 global financial crisis, their arrival “fueled public perceptions that Jordan’s economic hardships were a result of the Syrian presence, even though regional instability was the primary culprit.”<sup>151</sup> Events leading up to the Syrian refugee crisis had created an economically troubled atmosphere, and Syrian refugees became the scapegoat for pre-existing issues.

The power of public opinion should not be underestimated in how it can shape the atmosphere of host communities and policy for refugees in Jordan. In this case, public opinion has mainly turned against Syrian refugees as Jordanians realized Syrians would be in Jordan for years rather than months. Refugees are seen as taking away scarce Jordanian jobs and resources. Negative public opinion has been further exacerbated by decreased international support, a weakened security context, and further pressure on resources.<sup>152</sup> An ILO reports shows that 85 percent of Jordanian workers think that Syrians should not be allowed to freely enter the country and 65 percent believe that Syrians should only be allowed to live within refugee camps.<sup>153</sup> Given the instability already facing Jordan, “this deleterious public sentiment has significantly undermined the government’s willingness to host additional refugees.”<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Francis, “Jordan’s Refugee Crisis,” 11.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid*, 11.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid*, 7.

<sup>153</sup> Svein Erik Stave and Solveig Hillesund, “Impact of Syrian Refugees on the Jordanian Labour Market,” (Geneva and Beirut: International Labor Organization and FAFO, April 2015), 113.

<sup>154</sup> Francis, “Jordan’s Refugee Crisis,” 7.

A common perception among Jordanians is that humanitarian aid is disproportionatelyly beneficial to Syrian refugees. Eighty-four percent of Jordanians believe that Syrians are “unfairly supported financially” by humanitarian programming.<sup>155</sup> As discussed previously, many Jordanians were already experiencing unemployment or financial hardship prior to the arrival of Syrian refugees. Development work in areas like education also experienced setbacks upon the arrival of Syrian refugees.<sup>156</sup> Tension over humanitarian aid and programming was a problem noted by many of the interviewees. One interviewee commented, “Sometimes Jordanians who are poor themselves see Syrians getting cash and think, I’m poor too and Syrians are walking away with cash and I’m not getting anything.”<sup>157</sup> Another stated,

Imagine that the Syrians, when they came, they came to very poor communities, to limited resources. They lived in urban communities, that is really slum. So even that Jordanian families, they were poor, so all the resources were directed towards the Syrian families and the Jordanian communities were completely neglected.<sup>158</sup>

Despite the mandate by the Jordanian government that humanitarian organizations dedicate a certain portion of their programming and funds to Jordanians, it is clear there are widespread feelings among Jordanians that Syrians are unfairly benefiting from humanitarian aid. Jordanian public opinion and perceptions of Syrian refugees shape the way in which they are treated by the government as well as in private spheres. One of the strained resources that has impacted public opinion has been water.

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<sup>155</sup> Francis, “Jordan’s Refugee Crisis,” 8.

<sup>156</sup> Interview 6

<sup>157</sup> Interview 8

<sup>158</sup> Interview 12

Water shortages, already one of the most serious issues facing Jordan today, have been exacerbated by the influx of Syrian refugees, making conservation and access difficult for Syrians in Jordan.<sup>159</sup> According to the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, “Jordan’s water crisis is a complex problem, worsened by the influx of Syrian refugees but rooted in complicated political dynamics including regional water competition, domestic tribal politics, and poor water management.”<sup>160</sup> As a result, one interviewee listed water as one of the greatest sources of tension between refugees and host communities alongside housing, saying that tensions over water use existed within host communities as well as refugee camps.<sup>161</sup> In order to understand why water is a key point of tension, it is necessary to examine the preexisting problems surrounding water consumption in Jordan.

Jordan is the third most water-poor country in the world as its main water source, the Jordan river, is almost already emptied by the time it reaches Jordanian territory.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, water in Jordan has been subjected to resource mismanagement and regional politics since the 1970s. Most of Jordan’s water comes from underground aquifers that deplete at twice the rate they are extracted and illegal wells run by influential Jordanian tribes.<sup>163</sup> Due to mismanagement and theft, fifty percent of all water

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<sup>159</sup> Carrion, “Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Confronting Difficult Truths,” 4.

<sup>160</sup> Francis, “Jordan’s Refugee Crisis,” 18.

<sup>161</sup> Interview 5

<sup>162</sup> Francis, “Jordan’s Refugee Crisis,” 15.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid*, 15.

resources are lost.<sup>164</sup> Taking into account pre-Syrian refugee crisis figures, Jordan will be completely out of water by 2060.<sup>165</sup>

Given these startling figures, it is no surprise that water is one of the biggest sources of host community tensions in Jordan. A massive influx of refugees has put increased pressure on already strained water resources. According to the Carnegie Endowment for Peace,

The Jordanian Ministry of Water and Irrigation projected that the demand for water in the kingdom would rise by 16 percent in 2013 and the water deficit would increase by almost 50% in part due to the influx of Syrian refugees. In some areas of Jordan, Syrian refugees have doubled the demand for water.<sup>166</sup>

The situation is particularly dire for the northern governorates of Jordan, where the Syrian population is especially high. It has even been reported that citizens in the northern governorates have stopped saving water out of fear that humanitarian organizations will take it and give it to Syrian refugees.<sup>167</sup> Water scarcity was already a serious issue in Jordan, but Syrian refugees have born much of the blame, making it one of the main sources of host community tensions.

Access to affordable housing is another point of tension that has made it difficult for Syrians to integrate into Jordan. One humanitarian worker stated that to host communities, the influx of refugees meant “lots of construction and rent prices going up.”<sup>168</sup> Unavailability of affordable housing especially impacts vulnerable Jordanians who

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<sup>164</sup> “Tapped Out: Water Scarcity and Refugee Pressures in Jordan,” *Mercy Corps*, (March 2014). Accessed March 1, 2016.

[https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/MercyCorps\\_TappedOut\\_JordanWaterReport\\_March204.pdf](https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/MercyCorps_TappedOut_JordanWaterReport_March204.pdf)

<sup>165</sup> *ibid*

<sup>166</sup> Francis, “Jordan’s Refugee Crisis,” 16.

<sup>167</sup> *ibid*, 18.

<sup>168</sup> Interview 4



have to pay higher rent prices due to increased demand.<sup>169</sup> It also has a disproportionate impact on refugees and Jordanians living in governorates with the greatest numbers of Syrians such as Mafrq, Irbid, and Amman.

The strain Syrians have put on Jordanian schools as a result of overcrowding has also contributed to host community tensions. Over half of the Syrian refugees in Jordan are under the age of eighteen, which has put significant strains on Jordan's educational capacities.<sup>170</sup> In Amman and Irbid, "nearly one-half of the schools suffer from overcrowding and have limited capacity to absorb additional students."<sup>171</sup> To deal with the fact that thousands of Syrian children entered into the Jordanian school system over the course of a couple years, many schools began the practice of double shifting. In double shifting, students are split up and Jordanian children are taught in the morning and Syrian students are taught in the afternoon. One humanitarian worker that works with an NGO that focuses on education described the negative effects of double shifting, saying,

Children don't go to school for more than four hours... Sessions are thirty minutes and the normal sessions are fortyfive. And the class will have at least fifty students. The teacher cannot manage a number of children. If he has the time to get three or four students answer or go to the blackboard and write, that would be amazing.<sup>172</sup>

This practice not only separates Jordanian children from other children, but shortens classtime and places additional pressures on teachers.

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<sup>169</sup> Carrion, "Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Confronting Difficult Truths," 4.

<sup>170</sup> Francis, "Jordan's Refugee Crisis," 8.

<sup>171</sup> *ibid*, 8.

<sup>172</sup> Interview 12

In addition, there are challenges preventing Syrian refugee children from receiving an education at all. While officially public schools are not supposed to turn away refugee children, some humanitarian workers reported that students were rejected from their nearby public schools. One interviewee stated, “Officially, the principal has to accept the refugees. Unofficially, behind the scenes, some of them, they tell them, ‘we don’t have space- go’.”<sup>173</sup> In other cases children are prevented from going to school because parents do not think it is safe for their children to get to school. According to one interviewee, some parents worry that it is not safe for their children, particularly their daughters, to walk to school for fear of them being harassed in the streets.<sup>174</sup>

Preexisting economic issues in Jordan, negative public perceptions of refugees, and the strain on public resources that was triggered by the influx of Syrian refugees have made host community tensions a central challenge facing urban refugees. Host community integration, as well as barriers to employment, are serious issues that affect the lives of all refugees in Jordan. Now it is important to understand how these issues lead to negative coping mechanisms among Syrians, such as child labor, early marriage, and returning to Syria.

### *Negative Coping Mechanisms*

Child labor is one coping mechanism among Syrian refugees in Jordan in response to the ban on employment because children are thought to be less likely than adults to be caught and punished by Jordanian authorities. In Jordan, many organizations

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<sup>173</sup> Interview 12

<sup>174</sup> Interview 20

report that child labor among Syrian refugees has become a widespread practice. In Chatham house reports that in 30,000 Syrian children are illegally working in the informal sector.<sup>175</sup> Tamkeen, a labor rights organization in Jordan, claims that 46% of Syrian refugee boys and 14% of girls work over 44 hours a week.<sup>176</sup>

Humanitarian workers frequently reported the occurrence of child labor in interviews. When asked why child labor among Syrian refugees appeared to be so prevalent in Jordan, one interviewee responded, “It is much easier. Let’s say you are at a supermarket. It is much easier to bring a kid and ask him to clean and organize things and stuff put things in good shape than to ask for a man. And the man, he can’t work easily, the police will come.”<sup>177</sup> Another interviewee added that child labor was especially prevalent in rural areas where children could work in fields rather than in storefronts.<sup>178</sup> Since children are seen as less likely to get caught, and families desperately need an income, child labor is seen as one of the only viable solutions. Furthermore, the types of jobs children are working are the hardest types of jobs to monitor.

As a result of child labor, more refugee children are being pulled out of school. One interviewee commented that children are less likely to attend school if their family does not have money because they are expected to help provide for their families.<sup>179</sup> One employee with a humanitarian NGO described the story of one child in such a position:

I found a child once, he lives in Mafraq with his mother and brothers and sisters, and he wakes at 5:00 am every morning to go to Zarqa to work in a battery shop and works there until 6 pm and then goes back home. He’s

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<sup>175</sup> Carrion, “Syrian Refugees in Jordan: Confronting Difficult Truths,” 9.

<sup>176</sup> Andrew Hosken, “Syrian child refugees being exploited in Jordan,” *BBC News*, (November 2015). Accessed March 15, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-34714021>

<sup>177</sup> Interview 2

<sup>178</sup> Interview 4

<sup>179</sup> Interview 4

around sixteen. He doesn't go to school. He leaves early and comes back very late, which raises a lot of protections concerns... What he gets is I think 5 or 6 jd a day.<sup>180</sup>

Stories like these described by those working in the field illustrate how child labor becomes a coping mechanism when finding legal employment is next to impossible.

Another coping mechanism for Syrian refugees is early marriage, most often for females. While early marriage was not uncommon in some parts of Syria before the crisis, research shows that early marriage has increased as a result of the conflict. A UNICEF report on early marriage in Jordan states,

Interviews suggested that early marriage has long been an accepted practice in Syria, but that the Syrian crisis has exacerbated existing pressures believed to encourage early marriage and has also increased the danger that girls married early may end up in abusive or exploitative situations.<sup>181</sup>

This is demonstrated by the increased prevalence of early marriage among Syrian refugee girls in Jordan between 2013 and the first quarter of 2014, which rose from twenty-five per cent to 31.7 percent.<sup>182</sup>

The spousal age gap between Syrian girls and their husbands also increased between 2012 and 2014. UNICEF reports that Syrian girls married between the ages of fifteen and seventeen, 16.2 per cent of them married men that were at least fifteen years older than them.<sup>183</sup> One aid worker that focused on working with children stated, "The family may feel like their daughter is not safe or they do not have enough money to

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<sup>180</sup> Interview 6

<sup>181</sup> "A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan," *UNICEF* (2014). Accessed February 10, 2016. [http://www.unicef.org/mena/UNICEFJordan\\_EarlyMarriageStudy2014\(1\).pdf](http://www.unicef.org/mena/UNICEFJordan_EarlyMarriageStudy2014(1).pdf)

<sup>182</sup> *ibid*, 9.

<sup>183</sup> *ibid*, 9.

provide for her... Sometime the husband is the same age as the girl, and sometimes the husband is the same age as her father.”<sup>184</sup>

The reasons named for the increased rates of early marriage include the belief that marriage of a Syrian girl to a Jordanian man may ease the process of entry for the Syrian girl’s family and that marriage may provide girls with greater physical and economic security in Jordan.<sup>185</sup> The UNICEF report states,

As displacement and the challenges of living in exile are weakening other coping mechanisms, there is reason to be concerned that families may be more inclined than before to resort to child marriage in response to economic pressures or to provide a sense of security for their daughters.<sup>186</sup>

Families that may not have considered marrying their daughter at an early age in Syria are, in some cases, being forced to reconsider due to economic and security pressures brought on by displacement.

One consequence of early marriage is that very few girls remain in school after marriage. One aid worker said that in the organization’s study, out of 300 girls who had gotten married around age fifteen, only two had remained in school after marriage. Similar results were reported by UNICEF, as married girls are expected to prioritize the duties of being a wife and mother over education and mainstream Jordanian schools are not expecting of married, and especially pregnant, girls.<sup>187</sup>

Syrians living in Jordanian host communities face many challenges, such as barriers to employment and problems integrating into host communities, and as a result have had to resort to negative coping mechanisms such as child labor and early marriage.

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<sup>184</sup> Interview 3

<sup>185</sup> “A Study on Early Marriage in Jordan,” *UNICEF*, 10.

<sup>186</sup> *ibid*, 11.

<sup>187</sup> *ibid*, 9.

Now that we have seen the challenges and responses of humanitarian actors, refugees in camps, and urban refugees to the protracted refugee crisis in Jordan, the next section will examine the solutions being sought to the crisis and explore the innovations both humanitarians and refugees have created to respond to the crisis.

### **3.4 Analysis**

This section will place the Syrian refugee crisis in the context of the four other protracted situations evaluated by UNHCR in the decade of initiatives in order to analyze the effectiveness and possibilities in solutions to PRS. Repatriation and resettlement are not large-scale, viable options for Syrian refugees at this time. Therefore, local integration is the only solution available. While allowing urban refugees to access and benefit from public services like education is a step in the right direction, the success of this solution can only be realized if Jordan allows refugees to enter the labor market, ends restrictions on freedom of movement, and gets rid of refugee camps. In order to accomplish this, there must be strong partnerships and cooperation between UNHCR, the Jordanian government, and the international aid community, and the potential benefits of hosting refugees must be emphasized in host communities.

#### *Repatriation*

With the conflict still unfolding in Syria between the rebel forces, the Assad regime, and ISIS, repatriation is not considered an option for most refugees. If a host

government sends a Syrian refugee back to Syria, it is considered to be a violation of the international principle of non-refoulement. While several incidents of refoulement have been reported in Jordan, these incidents are far from widespread.<sup>188</sup> Due to the violence and political unrest still unfolding in many parts of Syria, repatriation is not a sustainable solution that can be pursued at the present.

Repatriation is also not a viable solution for refugees in PRS in other parts of the world as well due to political issues and human rights abuses. However, in places like Bangladesh, repatriation occurred that was not voluntary in violation of the principle of non-refoulement. In order to ensure that refugees are not pushed back into Syria where they would face violence and political instability, it is essential to ensure that refugees can have their basic needs met in host countries.

### *Resettlement*

Resettlement is a highly sought after solution for many Syrians, but relocating to a third country presents many difficulties and dangers for most refugees. The number of Syrian asylum applicants are far greater than the number of resettlement positions open around the world, and even the number of applicants is a small portion of the total refugee population. According to UNHCR data, only slightly more than ten per cent of Syrian fleeing the conflict have sought refuge in Europe.<sup>189</sup> Worldwide there are only

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<sup>188</sup> “Jordan: Syrians blocked, stranded in the desert,” *Human Rights Watch*, Last updated June 2015. Accessed March 15, 2016. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/03/jordan-syrians-blocked-stranded-desert>

<sup>189</sup> “Syrian Regional Response,” *UNHCR*, Accessed March 20, 2016.

170,911 resettlement positions for Syrians<sup>190</sup>, but in 2015 alone more than a million sought asylum in Europe.<sup>191</sup>

The journey to Europe through Turkey, over the Aegean Sea and into Greece has also proved perilous for thousands and thousands of Syrians. In 2015, more than 800 people died in the sea crossing from Turkey to Greece.<sup>192</sup> UNHCR reports that, “During the first six weeks of 2016, 410 people drowned out of the 80,000 people crossing the eastern Mediterranean. This amounts to a thirty-five fold increase year-on-year from 2015.”<sup>193</sup> Children are disproportionately represented in this statistic; an average of two children have died each day making the crossing from September 2015 to March 2016. In the same time period, 340 children have died in crossing the Mediterranean, many of them babies and toddlers.<sup>194</sup>

Not only is this journey dangerous, but as of March 18, 2016, refugees who do successfully cross into Greece may be sent back to Turkey, according to an agreement reached between Turkey and the EU. *The New York Times* reports that under this deal migrants that take illicit routes from Turkey to Greece will be sent back in exchange for 6.6 billion dollars in aid.<sup>195</sup> However, it is unclear how this deal will be monitored and enforced, and humanitarian groups have raised serious objections to the deal, claiming

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<sup>190</sup> “Resettlement and Other Forms of Legal Admission for Syrian Refugees,” *UNHCR*, March 2016. Accessed March 20, 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/52b2febafc5.pdf>

<sup>191</sup> “Syrian Regional Response,” *UNHCR*, Accessed March 20, 2016.

<sup>192</sup> “Migrant Crisis: Migration in Europe Described in Seven Charts,” *BBC*, March 2016. Accessed March 20, 2016. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>

<sup>193</sup> “Two children drown every day on average trying to reach safety in Europe,” *UNHCR*, February 2016. Accessed March 20, 2016. <http://www.unhcr.org/56c707d66.html>

<sup>194</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> James Kanter, “European Union Reaches Deal with Turkey to Return New Asylum Seekers,” *New York Times*, Last updated March 2016. Accessed March 25, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/19/world/europe/european-union-turkey-refugees-migrants.html?action=click&contentCollection=Europe&module=RelatedCoverage&region=Marginalia&pgtype=article>



that is a violation of international law. The deal “underlines frustration at a decision last year by Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to accept large numbers of people from war-torn countries like Syria and disperse them around Europe.”<sup>196</sup> Under these recent policies, it is clear that not are there far fewer resettlement spots than there are people seeking asylum, but the current political climate in many places is hostile to having Syrians settle there.

In all four protracted situations evaluated by UNHCR in the decade of initiatives, large scale resettlement was not a viable option. Worldwide, resettlement spots are far outnumbered by the number of asylum applicants, and the solution is only accessible to the most vulnerable refugees. Therefore, despite the amount of media attention that Syrian migrants in Europe receive, humanitarian and diplomatic efforts should focus on the third durable solution, local integration.

### *Local Integration*

The third solution suggested by the UNHCR to PRS is local integration. As has been discussed in previous sections, local integration has been prevented in Jordan due to government policies that prohibit Syrians from entering the labor market and make it difficult for refugees to leave camps and move into host communities. Rather than being self-sustaining or relying on government resources, most refugees are dependent on international humanitarian aid.

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<sup>196</sup>Kanter, “European Union Reaches Deal with Turkey to Return New Asylum Seekers.”

Despite the problems facing Syrian refugees that prevent them from fully integrating into Jordanian host communities, refugees in Jordan do enjoy several benefits living in Jordan. This was especially true in the earlier stages of the crisis, when refugees had free healthcare in public hospitals. While schools may be overcrowded and class time reduced, refugees still have access to public education in Jordan, as well as a variety of other public services. However, being prohibited from joining the formal labor force makes it impossible for refugees to become self-sufficient legally and integrate into Jordanian society.

One of the primary reasons that local integration is not working very well in Jordan is that Syrians are barred access to the labor market. Past evaluations of PRS have shown that successful integration can only occur when refugees are able to have access to the labor market, as was the case with Croatian refugees in Serbia. As explained by many of the aid workers interviewed for this research, access to the labor market is the crux of the many problems facing Syrians in Jordan, because the ability to earn an income is the only way for refugees to become independent from aid and become self sustainable. Dependency on fluctuating aid may also lead to negative coping mechanisms such as child labor and early marriage, as was seen among Eritrean refugees in South Sudan as well as in Jordan.

The benefits of allowing refugees access to the labor market are clear from observing the differences between the the success of the integration of refugees in Tanzania in 1972 compared with the integration of the later influx of refugees in the 1990s. The refugees in 1972 were given land and allowed to work. As a result, they

contributed to the Tanzanian economy paying taxes and growing their agricultural sector in underdeveloped areas. This benefited the refugees as well as their host community. In addition, they no longer needed humanitarian assistance. However, the later waves of refugees were not given the same options. Rather than contributing to the economy, they remained dependent on humanitarian assistance and stuck in refugee camps, much like many of the Syrians in Jordan today.

Another challenge to achieving successful local integration for Syrians in Jordan is that they face restricted mobility, particularly in leaving refugee camps. Almost all of the interviewees for this research said that it was better for refugees to live in host communities rather than cities, yet the Jordanian government has made it very challenging for refugees to leave camps and move to urban areas. This was also the case with the PRS in East Sudan and Bangladesh. Restriction on refugees' freedom of movement kept refugees from contributing to their host country by separating them from the society and the economy of the rest of the country. Instead, they continued to be dependent on humanitarian aid and unable to develop job skills that may be useful in the future. While camps remain a way for host countries to keep refugees out of sight and from interfering with local infrastructure, it ignores the social and economic benefits that refugees may bring to host communities as well as the toll that living in a camp for years has on refugees.

*Conclusion*

In order to successfully resolve the PRS in Jordan, as past evaluations of PRS has shown, refugees must be allowed access to the labor market and allowed to freely move out of camps and into cities. For this to be achieved, humanitarian and government actors must work together to create policies and practices that facilitate the social, political, and economic integration of refugees into the host country. TANCOS, the strategy being implemented by Tanzanian government and UNHCR, is one example how different government and humanitarian actors can seek solutions to PRS through multi-sectoral cooperation.

While repatriation and resettlement are not the primary solutions available to most refugees at the time of this research, these solutions should not be ignored. It is essential for the international community to seek a political solution to the conflict in Syria, so that voluntary repatriation becomes possible and Syrians can rebuild their lives in their home country. It is also important for the international community to open up more resettlement spots for asylum seekers. This would allow the most vulnerable refugees to begin a new life and escape the barriers and burdens they face in their host country.

The Jordanian government, UNHCR, and international community all play significant roles in responding to the Syrian crisis as a PRS. The aid community, refugees in camps, and refugees in urban areas all face distinct challenges and have responded to these challenges in a myriad of ways. Humanitarian actors have struggled with decreased funding and organizations challenges and in turn have increased psychosocial support programs and have focused their resources in camps. Refugees in

camps have faced protection challenges, barriers to leaving camps and entering host communities, and general lack of opportunities in camps. As a result, some have reentered the country they had originally fled. Finally, refugees in urban areas have had to go up against barriers to employment and experienced significant difficulties integrating into host communities, and have turned to illegal labor, including child labor, as well as early marriage as coping mechanisms. However, in the past couple of years there has been signs that Jordan could become a leader in making local integration a sustainable solution that benefits both refugees and host communities. These innovations will be discussed in the conclusion.

## **Conclusion**

Chapters two and three have examined the humanitarian responses and solutions to PRS around the world, focusing on the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan as a case study. It was deduced that in order to successfully resolve the PRS in Jordan, Syrian refugees must be allowed access to the labor market and be able to move freely from refugee camps to host communities. It is also essential that the international community make a sustained commitment to supporting Jordan and Syrian refugees by pushing for a political solution to the conflict in Syria and opening up more resettlement spots for refugees. This chapter will give examples of innovative solutions to resolving the PRS in Jordan, such as creating special economic zones where Syrian refugees can work and creating new standards for humanitarian aid in protracted situations. Finally, this chapter will pose questions for future research on the subject of PRS and the Syrian refugee crisis.

### **Innovative Solutions**

An increased commitment on the part of the international community to resolving the Syrian refugee crisis is needed if the PRS in Jordan is ever to end. Donor countries must contribute greater sums of money to aid organizations who are chronically under-funded. Countries should also increase the number of resettlement spots they have open for Syrian refugees rather than sending migrants back from Greece and other areas. Perhaps most importantly, the international community must seek a political solution to the conflict in Syria so refugees can begin to return to their country and begin the process of rebuilding. However, outside of these three actions that will allow for resettlement and

voluntary repatriation, there are also new ideas and solutions that would allow Syrian refugees to better integrate into their host community and live dignified lives without total dependence on humanitarian aid.

*New Standards in Humanitarian Responses to PRS*

Creating standards for humanitarian aid in protracted situations would benefit and serve both Syrian refugees and Jordanians in the long-term. The current adherence to Sphere Standards in protracted situations, as discussed in section 2.3, hinders the aid communities ability to encourage development and does not enable refugees to become independent. This strategy should include facilitating an exit from camps into host communities and include the input of displaced people. New standards could also include the use of development and other types of aid into the humanitarian response to protracted situations. Host communities receiving benefits from the aid may be more apt to welcome refugees and aid could enable refugees to become self-sustaining rather than dependent on the international community indefinitely.

In responding to humanitarian emergencies, UNHCR uses the Sphere Standards, which were created in 1998 by a group of humanitarian NGOs and “represent the level of service to which the majority of humanitarian NGOs hold themselves responsible.”<sup>197</sup> Oftentimes, humanitarian funding is dependent on adhering to these standards. These standards can be applied to both natural disasters as well as political conflict, and are used all over world. In many ways, the Sphere Standards are a very useful tool to respond

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<sup>197</sup> McDougal and Beard, "Revisiting Sphere: New Standards of Service Delivery for New Trends in Protracted Displacement," 90.

to humanitarian disasters. They incorporate the field-experience of hundreds of NGOs and represent a truly global and cooperative humanitarian response. In addition, they incorporate the input of displaced people themselves, giving them a voice in how the international community responds to the problems they face.<sup>198</sup> New standards should keep these aspects of the Sphere Standards. However, standards must shift to fit the specific needs inherent to protracted situations.

While useful for enhancing the professionalism of humanitarian work and creating requirements for humanitarian aid and services in emergency situations, these standards fall short in fostering an effective response for long term situations. As seen in chapter three, aid from organizations like WFP create links of dependence between refugees and aid, leaving them at serious risk of malnutrition when they are not able to sustain the amount of aid they can distribute. Some standards need to be readjusted to fit in with the nature of protracted situations, and some new standards must be created in order to enable refugees, such as capacity building. Public health scholars Locus McDougal and Jennifer Beard state,

Standards designed to improve the health determinants of people living in acute phase emergencies are not always relevant to service delivery for those living in protracted displacement. Protracted emergencies require an equivalent, more appropriate set of standards and indicators.<sup>199</sup>

These standards could also frame humanitarian standards in positive, proactive terms instead of negative ones. For example, rather than focusing on fighting mortality (an essential part of an initial humanitarian response), the standards could promote

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<sup>198</sup> McDougal and Beard, "Revisiting Sphere: New Standards of Service Delivery for New Trends in Protracted Displacement," 94.

<sup>199</sup> *ibid*, 90.



livelihoods, education, and health. New goals and strategies aimed at development and targeted at helping host communities would also allow humanitarian groups to tap into other types of aid such as development or peacebuilding. If aid groups working with Syrian refugees had access to other funding sources, they could build up the capacities of Jordanian schools, water infrastructure, and affordable housing. Not only would these actions benefit Syrian refugees, but the host communities as well. In addition, if host communities are seeing tangible benefits from the presence of Syrian refugees, community integration could significantly improve. By moving away from the Sphere Standards created to respond to short-term emergencies, humanitarian organizations could more effectively address the long-term concerns fundamental to protracted situations.

Another key part of reframing the Sphere Standards to fit the needs of refugees in protracted situations involves facilitating refugees' exit from camps into host communities. As many aid workers interviewed in interviews, living in host communities rather than camps provides refugees a life with greater dignity and opportunities. This is especially important in long-term displacement. According to Locus and Beard,

The ultimate goal of all humanitarian aid to displaced populations should be to enable the people who have undergone forced migration to settle permanently in a safe environment where they have legal protection, equal access to resources, and the opportunity to be self-reliant.<sup>200</sup>

Refugee camps, economically and socially excluded from the rest of the country, do not enable refugees to become self-sustainable. In order to achieve this, humanitarian actors should focus on improving aid distribution in urban areas and advocating for refugees'

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<sup>200</sup> *ibid*, 98.

access to public services and the labor market in host communities. As stated by reporter Nicholas Seeley, if Jordan can open up the labor market and public services to Syrian refugees, as it has started to already, “Jordan could set a strong precedent for how to accept and take care of urban refugees. If not, Syrians living in Jordan’s cities could see their freedoms diminish significantly.

### *Special Economic Zones*

As discussed in previous chapters, Syrians are banned from the formal labor market in Jordan. Many humanitarian aid workers identified this barrier as the most significant limitation on the lives of refugees. Without access to employment, they are unable to become self-sustaining and remain dependent on humanitarian aid. Although some refugees work in the informal labor market, they are often paid less than other workers and may face serious consequences if caught. As a result, negative coping mechanisms such as child labor and early marriage are utilized by some refugees as a way to increase their family income or decrease their economic burdens.

While opening up the labor market to refugees would help resolve many of these issues, there is strong resistance to this idea from Jordanian host communities who worry about already high unemployment rates. In order to meet the needs of refugees while addressing the host community’s concerns about unemployment, Jordan could allow Syrians to be employed in businesses operating in special economic zones.

In the article “Help Refugees Help Themselves: Let Displaced Syrians Join the Labor Market”, Alexander Betts and Paul Collier suggest that two economic zones would be created, one with international businesses that employed Syrians and Jordanians and displaced Syrian businesses that may only employ Syrians. These “industrial incubator zones” would allow Syrians to earn a living while generating new business and industry for the host country.<sup>201</sup>

Even before the Syrian refugee crisis, Jordan faced economic struggles, particularly in the wake of the global economic crisis of 2008. In the past, Jordanian government leaders have advocated for the expansion of Jordanian industrial sector and for the development of a manufacturing economy. However, Jordan is currently unable to do so as it,

cannot compete with low-income countries for cheap labor, nor can it compete with advanced economies on technology and innovation... To industrialize, then, Jordan needs a small number of major businesses and a large number of skilled laborers to relocate to manufacturing clusters.<sup>202</sup>

Special economic zones could create just such an environment, enabling Jordan to reach its economic goals without taking away jobs from Jordanians.

The creation of special economic zones would also open up opportunities for sustainable international involvement. The international community could support special economic zones “through financial incentives and trade concessions.”<sup>203</sup> In addition, special economic zones would open up other forms of international aid outside of

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<sup>201</sup> Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, “Help Refugees Help Themselves,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 2015. Accessed April 4, 2016.

<sup>202</sup> <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/levant/2015-10-20/help-refugees-help-themselves>

<sup>203</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> *ibid.*

humanitarian assistance, such as aid set aside for peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction.

Furthermore, there is historical evidence that special economic zones could be successfully implemented. Other states have previously employed refugees to further their own economic development, such as ethnic Greek refugees from Turkey in the 1920s and Central American refugees at the end of the Cold War era. This approach can also be seen in how the Burundian refugees in 1972 farmed under-developed regions in Tanzania. Although situation in Jordan is different because refugees would be working manufacturing rather than farming jobs, “zonal development is a flexible approach that can be adapted to a variety of situations... there is no reason why refugees count not work to improve a manufacturing sector rather than an agricultural one.”<sup>204</sup> The creation of special economic zones has enormous potential for refugees, host communities, and the international community if successfully implemented.

### **Areas for Further Research**

This research project sought to answer two questions. The first question asks, what are the implications of the humanitarian response to the PRS for Syrians in Jordan? To answer the first question, chapter three provided an overview of the humanitarian response to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and how it has impacted refugees in camps and urban areas. This research found that Syrian refugees in Jordanian camps face SGBV and restrictions on leaving camps and moving into host communities. As a result, some

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<sup>204</sup> Betts and Collier, “Help Refugees Help Themselves.”

refugees have risked their lives by returning to Syria. For urban refugees, barriers to entering the labor market, cuts in food and health care aid, and integrating into host communities have been the primary challenges. They have dealt with those challenges by engaging in illegal employment, including child labor, and early marriage.

The second research question asks, how can solutions implemented in past protracted refugee situations provide answers on how to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan? As is shown in the literature review of PRS around the world and the specific case study, repatriation and resettlement are not large-scale, viable options for Syrians. Therefore, local integration is the only solution available. Learning from past evaluations of PRS, it is clear that while allowing urban refugees to access and benefit from public services like education is a step in the right direction, the success of this solution can only be realized if Jordan allows refugees to enter the labor market, ends restrictions on freedom of movement, and gets rid of refugee camps. These goals can be accomplished with strong partnerships and cooperation between UNHCR, the Jordanian government, and the international aid community. The potential benefits of hosting refugees must be emphasized in host communities.

Innovative solutions such as creating special economic zones for Syrian refugees to develop manufacturing in Jordan and shifting the standards for humanitarian response to protracted situations have the potential to make local integration a successful durable solution in this PRS. However, despite the opportunities these innovations present, there significant impediments to implementing these solutions.

In regards to the creation of special economic zones for Syrian workers, there is a risk that these workers may be abused. In the past, special economic zones in countries such as India have created an environment of exploitation, where workers are paid less than minimum wage under grueling conditions. In order to prevent such a scenario unfolding in Jordan, it would be necessary for the government as well as the international community to monitor these zones and enforce fair labor practices.

Special economic zones may also lead to protests from the Jordanian government and people who do not want Syrian refugees to become further integrated into Jordanian life. As was previously discussed, the existing Jordanian government receives its support from East Bank bedouin tribes and relies on the complacency of marginalized groups such as the Palestinians and Iraqis. A further demographic shift could fuel unrest and calls for government reform. In this way, the government may push against the creation of special economic zones and continue to pressure refugees to remain in camps. Further research is necessary to explore the impact and potential benefits of such zones as well as gauge public support among Jordanians for such a project.

In addition, further research is necessary on the implementation of humanitarian aid in the long-term in order to explore how the Sphere Standards could be altered to best meet the needs of refugees in PRS. 3RP, the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan, has created initiatives aimed at improving social cohesion and fostering skill-building and livelihoods programs. It would be beneficial for studies to be conducted comparing the successes and failure of 3RP across host countries in order to better understand the

complex dynamic between NGO, UNHCR, and government action and how humanitarian response can be shifted to address medium- to long-term needs of refugees.

Looking forward, Jordan could become an example of best practices for dealing with PRS at a time when millions of people are stuck in protracted displacement. In the words of PRS scholars of Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, “In pursuing a development-based approach to the Syrian refugee crisis, Amman could not be fairly accused of cynically exploiting a tragedy... When it comes to refugee policy, compassion and enlightened self-interest are not mutually exclusive.”<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>205</sup>Betts and Collier, “Help Refugees Help Themselves.”

**Appendix A: Interview Dates**

Interview 1	7/8/15
Interview 2	7/8/15
Interview 3	7/9/15
Interview 4	7/12/15
Interview 5	7/8/15
Interview 6	6/10/15
Interview 7	6/10/15
Interview 8	6/10/15
Interview 9	6/21/15
Interview 10	6/22/15
Interview 11	6/22/15
Interview 12	6/25/15
Interview 13	6/25/15
Interview 14	7/7/15
Interview 15	7/7/15
Interview 16	7/7/25
Interview 17	7/5/16
Interview 18	6/23/15
Interview 19	6/21/15
Interview 20	7/13/15
Interview 21	7/5/15
Interview 22	7/9/15



## Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What do you see as the current needs of the Syrian refugee population in Jordan?
2. How do you feel those needs have changed as the crisis has shifted from long term to short term?
3. How are needs of refugees in urban areas different than refugee needs in camps?
4. How are organizational challenges in urban areas different than organization challenges in camps?
5. Does your organization provide more funding to programs directed at refugees in camps or urban areas?
6. Do you think that there are gaps in the services being provided for urban refugees?
  - a. What are they?
  - b. What does your organization do to address those gaps?
  - c. Is there a particular subset of the population who you feel their needs are not being met?
7. Looking at the long term nature of this crisis, do you believe it is most prudent refugees to live in camps or host communities?
  - a. If host communities, why support camps?

\*Do you see yourself as a Humanitarian or development organization? Why? How do you define humanitarian and development? Have you changed the type of activities your organization has carried out as time goes on?

8. What legal restrictions are most challenging for Syrian refugees?
  - a. Do you think legal restrictions will evolve as the refugees stays extend?
9. Do you think refugees' access to public will change as time goes on given the long term nature of the crisis?
  - a. Has access already changed?
10. Have you experienced issues or challenges regarding refugee integration into the host community?
  - a. Do your programs also provide assistance to or include Jordanian communities
  - b. How has this changed as you transition into your nth year of working here?
11. How does your and other organizations coordinate in the light of a protracted situation?
  - a. When do you see yourself leaving?

- b. How do you decide who/what sectors to prioritize when there's less funding?
  - c. Do you see there as being any competition to attract refugees between Save/IRC and other humanitarian orgs doing similar activities?
12. Research Question: How are humanitarian aid organizations and Syrian refugees adapting as the refugee crisis in Jordan shifts from the short to the long term?
  13. What should academics or researchers be asking about what's happening in the field?
  14. Do you know anyone that you think I should talk to about this in a different organization?

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